Annals of the Five Senses

C. M. GRIEVE

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ANNALS OF THE FIVE SENSES

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BY

C. M. GRIEVE

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"The greater part of readers, instead of blaming us for passing trifles, will wonder that on mere trifles so much labour is expended, with such importance of debate and such solemnity of diction. To them I answer with confidence that they are judging of an art which they do not understand; yet cannot much reproach them with their ignorance, nor promise that they should become, in general, by learning criticism, more useful, happier or wiser."

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TO

JOHN BUCHAN

For the encouragement and help he has given to a young and unknown writer (as young as it is possible to be in the Twentieth Century, and almost entirely unknown, at least to himself), I dedicate these poems and these . . . psychological studies, essays, mosaics (call them what you will) which I have (perhaps the best word in the meantime is) "designed."

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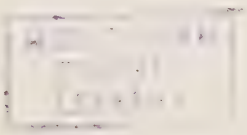
IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THE old lady described Shakespeare as being "full of quotations." So are my studies: I having deemed it desirable for the most part to show the psychological movements, with which I am mainly concerned, reflected through the current reading and cultural conditions of the characters involved.

As fish are seen through an aquarium so these perhaps strange fish of mine are discernible almost entirely through a "strong solution of books"—and not only of books but of magazines and newspaper articles and even of speeches. What I have done is similar to what is done when a green light on a railway replaces a red light, or *vice versa*, in a given lamp.

The sources of certain of my quotations I unfortunately cannot now trace. For most of those taken from copyright work I have to thank the various authors and publishers. If inadvertently I have anywhere used copyright material without the necessary permission, I err through no lack of effort to trace my quotations: and hope to have the indulgence of those upon whose rights I may have trespassed.

I have quoted, *inter alia*, from the following:—Elbert Hubbard, S. Cyran, Dr South,



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C. M. GRIEVE.

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I CEREBRAL

"At least," he said, "we spent with Socrates
Some memorable days and in our youth
Were curious, and respectful of the Truth."

"To maintain order, harmony, and excellence in the territory under one's own hat will keep one well-employed."

CEREBRAL

PRIM little gardens ran out of the left side of his head right into and through the discoloured and ink-spotted wall-paper with its long yellow lines and tight little pink roses, and through the wall which was so thin that if the wall-paper had not been put on first it could never have stood at all, and into the next room where his landlady (who was so thin that when she shut one eye she looked just like a needle) sat, at that hour of the evening, knitting the inevitable grey Shetland shawl, with her feet on the shiny fender: and all that quite as a matter of course and without the slightest element of incongruity or confusion,—without blurring the yellow bars or the pink buds in the least, or minimising the disfiguring reality of one splash of ink or one stain of damp,—without dematerialising the irreducible minimum of wall-power—and, above all, without alarming the meagre ungracious spinster (who was so thin that when she shut her eyes she couldn't be seen at all, making him wish, in moments of trial, that she had been born blind), clicking steadily away with her wooden needles, or breaking in on her arid privacy at all!

There everything was, *un chaos decoratif*, on the left side of his head, and all with that cut and coloured clearness which belongs rather to the things of art than to the things of experi-

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ence: or if the edge of his head and the wall-paper and the tentatively existent wall and the next room with its ill-conditioned furniture and sordid tidiness, and particularly the Lean Lady herself, were a little duller in hue, impinging a trifle less daintily on his mind than the prim little plots, why so little and such a trifle it was that he was barely sensible of it. (And, indeed, had it been otherwise, he had been greatly put out, for, being young as he was, he still esteemed clarity of vision above all things, having always in his mind the words of S. Cyran when he said: "The least cloud which is on our mind will spread itself over our papers like an evil breath tarnishing the brightness of a mirror; the slightest indisposition of our spirit is like a worm which will pass into our book and gnaw the hearts of those who read to the end of the world": Or else that sounding passage of his sermon wherein Dr South declares: "The image of God in man is that universal rectitude of all the faculties of the soul by which they stand apt and disposed to their several offices and operations. And, first, for the noblest faculty, Understanding! It was then sublime, clear, and inspiring, and, as it were, the soul's upper region, lofty and serene, free from all the vapours and disturbances of the inferior affections. . . . Like the sun, it had both light and agility: it knew

no rest but in motion; no quiet but in activity. It did arbitrate upon the several reports of the senses and all the varieties of the imagination. . . . In sum, it was vegete, quick and lively; open as the day, untainted as the morning, full of the innocence and sprightliness of youth: it gave the soul a bright and full view into all things!" But thus much for the Essay on Human Perfection and the mental well-being of Adam in the Garden of Eden: at all events he was so constrained to keep his mirror bright, and who will gainsay that a sense of the whole is the sign of a sound mind and that there be many who have it sadly to seek these days?)

Nor did the thousand and one other things of which severally and jointly he was just as acutely conscious and just as acutely critical, not even the harvesting of his lively eyes which, looking this way and that, could see the changeful, changeless thoroughfare without, where the trams rode garishly, or the rather more select crescent curving off from it, each with its trees and divers lights and processions of people coming and going, and apricot and lemon shop windows and sphinx houses: nor yet the busy work of his hands under the direction of an insignificant small portion of the lower part of the front of his brain on the typewriter, import the least disharmony or friction, although he

realised that if he did not have to go on with that endless typing (Alas! the *Leader* had to have it first thing in the morning—a column article on "The Scottish Element in Ibsen"), if he could release that little under bit of his brain, freedom from its infinitesimal drag would give the whole atmosphere just a perceptible lightening and ease, a roundness and perfection which it all but had.

Night and day, city and country, sunshine and gaslight and electric blaze, myriad-faceted existences and his own extraordinarily vivid pictorial sense of his own cranial geography and anatomical activities were all co-visible to him, I say, and perfectly composed, without any conflict or strain. Nor were any of the elements permanent or passive. All of them lived, and each in perfect freedom, modifying or expanding, easing off or intensifying continually. They moved freely, each in its own particular whim, and they moved also with the unity of one impression. As one thing receded into unreality, the reality of other and ever other things became newly apparent (albeit oddly familiar and repetitive) taking him like trumpets. Colours flashed in and out like trout in clear waters. Surface impressions scuttled everywhere like rabbits with white scuts of discredit and under the ground (the darkness of which, needless to

say, had a perfectly penetrable and gracious quality), all manner of strange things led busy but quite undisquieting existences, intricate, yet orderly. But easy comprehension and complete possession were never lost. The transfusing vitality of his interest never failed to discharge to the tiniest detail the demands of that versatility of sensation and speculation. He was athrill with the miracle of sentience, quivering in every filament of his perceptions with an amazing aliveness. All his thoughts were to him (although all the while away down in the unguessable depths of his being, where the egos of his actualities and his appearances debated without end in the forum of the absolute, doubts may have been expressed as to what was becoming in a man of his years), every one of them sweet, careless, fragrant interpretations of the gratitude of being alive—Elysian fields of cogitation where all happy words which had endeavoured in honesty and humility to express for him raptures beyond adumbration, after their patient services of signification, entered into their full felicity—brilliant, joyous, poignant pages of appreciation, as sensitive and magical as the mind of youth ever lent to the wonder of being.

Continually the spirit of poetry broke blossoms about his head. Bits of old song floated

everywhere, little sweet verses of adventure, dalliance, inspiration, murmuring of unseen radiances and raptures unimaginable. . . . He made flowered names for his pictorial feelings. To them he dedicated arrows from virgin bows. . . . Constantly a new ego of his nature came in out of the multitudinous darknesses and lit to a flame. . . . It was "like an Atlas night when the moonbeams fall on domes of house and mosque and light up the green and yellow tiles, making them sparkle like enamels, and long shadows of cypresses cast great bands of darkness on the red sand. Then the croaking of frogs sounds metallic and by degrees resolves itself into a continuous tinkle, soothing and musical. Camels lie ruminating, their monstrous packs on their backs. As one passes they snarl and bubble and give out a faint odour as of a menagerie, mingled with that of tar, with which the Arabs cure their girth and saddle galls. From the Arab huts a high-pitched voice, to the accompaniment of a two-stringed guitar played with a piece of stiff palmetto leaf and the monotonous Arab drum that, if you listen to it long enough, invades the soul, blends so inextricably with the crickets' note and the vast orchestra of insects that praise Allah without intermission, each after his own fashion, that it is difficult to say where the voice

ends and the insects' hum begins. Still, in despite of all, the singing Arab, the guitar and the drum, the croaking of the frogs and the shrill pæans of the insects, the night seems calm and silent, for all the voices are attuned so well to the surroundings that the serenity of the whole scene is unimpaired."

So here!.... The conversational exchanges of the Gay Young Woman in the corner shop and Mr Bellairs, Jun., of No. 119, whose bird's-eye bow was inevitably askew and clamorous for her righting, did not prevent him from hearing the Lean Lady behind the wall poke up her sinking fire to a new orange crowning (and the tapping of the grey ashes on the hearthstone made him suddenly most unusually sorry for her!), nor render inaudible the fall of another gooseberry leaf in one of the prim gardens, and that at the same time as he was evolving his old English master's profile from one of the inky stains on the wall-paper, taking a mental note that he must reply that very night to Peggy's letter (the words of which were a starry system in his memory), and changing the paper in his typewriter.

Indeed, and was it not perfectly proper that the clean blues and whites of the Gay Young Woman's chatter, the rosy personality of Bellairs *fils* with his fatted calves and knicker-

bocker check suit, the orange lacing of the stirred flames, and the bright red urgency of not forgetting to reply to Peggy's letter, should float nicely together? But it was a sorry thing, so it was, that he had to change the paper in his Roland every now and again, for what had that to do with the happy art of living?

Was there not an essential and most excellent harmony in all this? He thought of the boy, Jake, blowing the organ for his master. "The business in hand-blowing was to watch a plummet's rise and fall: you pumped for the fall and slacked for the rise. That was the hard prose of it, but Jake knew a better way. He would imagine himself blowing up a fire with a bellows. When a full organ was needed he had to blow like the devil to keep the plummet down, and then the fire soared under his efforts. Otherwise a gentle purring was easily simulated. At another time he would be filling a bucket at the well for a succession of thirsty horses and would so nicely time the allowance for each that the bucket was descending again on the very point of its being sucked dry. Or he would be the landlord of the 'Bit and Halter,' dozing over his parlour fire, nodding, nodding, down in little jerks, and then recovering himself with an indrawn rising sigh. Sometimes when the music was very liquid he would work a beer-

engine—one or two good pulls and then the upward flow through the siphon!"

Nor was his happy-headedness perceptibly reduced by his steady subconscious elucidation of the reaction on Ibsen's sensitive nature of the brief white nights, the chilly climate, the rugged Scandinavian scenery, and the influence of the various strains, Danish, German, Norwegian and Scottish (particularly the last), in his blood, giving the gamut of moods—philosophic, poetic, mystic and analytic: nor was he more than most obliquely intent on the motley mob, with anguish in their eyes and features convulsed and tortured into revealing their inmost secrets by their implacable creator, passing slowly by in a vivid and dream-like way—fascinating, inconstant Peer Gynt; Emperor Julian, that magnificent failure; the grotesque Steensgard; the whited sepulchre, Consul Bernick; the doughty Stockman; Gina, the homely-sensible, and Ekdal, the self-illusionist; Rebekka West and Johann Rosmer; Ellida Wangel and the Stranger; Hedda and Lowborg; Hilda and Solness; Asta and Rita Allness; John Gabriel Borkmann, his gloomy brows furrowed; and the entire cohort of subsidiary characters, each one personal and alive—so much so that while he traced the working of the Scottish leaven so strong in the "Northern

Rembrandt," in practice an artist and in his bones a moralist, each one became, shorn of racial stigmata, one of the passers-by in the streets without, and he himself the Ibsen of Edinburgh. . . . Instead he felt matter of fact and easy in this complex, nor was there any element of perturbation or torment in his mutable face. His eyes were happy and active as birds on a summer's morning, and his pipe was drawing evenly. At any minute he knew he might have the Chinese Republic on his head, and he felt quite equal to establishing an encyclopædic interaction with its manifold departments without yielding up the idlest of his present pleasant preoccupations. Or the Russian Duma might meet in the base of his skull and he would take in the whole *ensemble*, hear every word spoken, weigh up every speaker, discount the particular prejudices of each of his own personalities, educe an aggregate of conviction quite unanimous in its essence and airily at variance in its details—and communicate his impressions to the *Times*!

In a word, anything might happen—and nothing could happen (thus this fleeting mood!) that would surprise or perplex him or find him unequal to the strain. Why, not one of the countless impressions his brain was registering every instant, but immediately it was cleanly

stamped, suffered a "sea-change" into something entirely and most inconsequently different, just as a lightning artist may sketch the portrait of a popular actor, and then with another stroke of his pencil transform it into an excellent impression of a fishing fleet out from Newhaven.

(Perhaps it was because these effects were all so effortless and etherealised that this obscure but poignant sense of being an entirely different person to himself, afflicted him with such a minute sense of unreality. He felt somewhat as Shelley did, when writing his "Epipsychidion"—fearing that the sentiment inspiring the poem would be associated in the minds of the readers of contemporary literature with the philanderings of the housemaid and the butcher-boy!)

Withal he never for an instant lost possession of the least of his realised personalities, not even of those unborn, for whom he made allowance, even as the Greeks built their altar to the Unknown God. (Yet how could he be sure that he was leaving room enough, making sufficient allowance? How could he be sure what he was to receive from the Unknown—the Unknowable—when he could not be sure, be quite sure, what he was willing to receive from the Known, from, that is to say, even the

purest intimations of his Innermost Critic?—But beyond the regulation recognition of complexity modernity demanded, could one not probe too far—these continual allurements to new intricacies of introspection, wherein were they profitable? These were the "greyflies winding their sultry horns.") The Cynic, the Poet, the Prig, the Working Journalist, the Mere Human Being, his Father's Son, his Mother's Son, the Social Man, the Beardless Boy, the Seeker, Lazybones, the Innermost Critic, the Impersonal Factor, and an ever-increasing host more of them, all had fair play and carried on their separate activities with the mingled and protean materials of his mental life with the fair effect of a social commonwealth in being. His internal economy realised the dreams of the Socialist idealists; the interactions were free and full of enterprise; the tone throughout was healthy; and the Greek Chorus of Recorded-Opinion-Read never failed to moderate timeously. Best of all, perhaps, he was already wary—albeit mindful of Joubert's advice, keeping a corner of his head open and free for the opinions of his friends—not to put his reliance on opinions, least of all on his own opinions, and was becomingly fearful of that "cursed conceit of being right which kills all noble feeling," whether in himself or

others. So that most pervasive of all, perhaps, was the feeling of the skilled operator taking pride in the complicated work of his machine and jealous of its smooth running. Yet at times he could not help wondering, in a subterranean sort of way, whether intelligence itself was not an accident in the creative processes, or really the goal towards which mankind believed itself drifting. Deep down in his nature an elusive thought, for which he had not yet found that symbol needful to transform it into an intellectual reality, disseminated vague distrusts of certitude.

Thus, occasionally, he might have a shadowy sense of the incongruity of convening the Russian Duma under the woolly scalp of an undistinguished Scottish free-lance of two-and-twenty, or a hollow feeling (forthwith exorcised as a mean commercial instinct) that little profit to a fellow in his shoes lay in spending an hour or two as a Chinese Reference Library. He would, with the vaguest sensation of irrevocable poverty (which in the volatile atmosphere of these speculations was like the passing of a light cloud across the face of the sun), acknowledge that he had no standing in the world and that all his way was still to make.

Such prosaic reminders, invading the serenity of his mental life, made him feel in a distant

fashion, as he put it, "like an inside without an outside." But such aspects thrust themselves upon his consideration with tiny but undeniable insistence—if so far they simply amounted to this—that surrounding all his clear-cut conceptions were diffused colour-effects that still so obliterated design (and indeed they might be palimpsests concealing design upon design) as to leave it indistinguishable from pure colour-regions of delicate palpitant haze from which, perhaps, after seven years, as with Maris's canvases, the faint signs of design might break through the colour screen. Under these luminous washes lay, he imagined, the secret lineaments of destiny—"dreams of form in days of thought!" Moreover, even when the activities of his perceptions were like the round soft tendernesses of songs, rising and falling, broadening and soaring in high flights, that hung, eddied a moment, and then bore away to more slender and wonderful loftinesses, until their harmonies turned on the very apices of sweetness, dipped steeply, and flashed their joyous returns to the exultations of all his senses, rolling an ecstasy of understanding which gladdened the whole universe of his being, and the sad mortal elements which moved therein, until every nerve was athrill with the goodness and bravery of life, the calm spirit of the Inner-

most Critic dispassionately disassociated the essence of it all from the modern satisfaction in complexity for complexity's sake, insisting on the impossibility of his having captured more than the most fragmentary strain from the glorious never-ending

"maze of various man
In coloured music wrought."

So it was that, undaunted, he was always shadowily but effectively repeating in the recesses and byways of his far-going introspection the tremendous words of the Prandial Philosopher:—"If all that poetry has dreamt, all that insanity has raved, all that maddening narcotics have driven through the brains of men or smothered passions nursed in the fancies of women; if the dreams of the colleges and convents and boarding-schools, if every human feeling that sighs or smiles or curses or shrieks or groans should bring all their innumerable images such as course with every heart beat—the epic which held them all, though its letters filled the Zodiac, would be but a cupful from the infinite ocean of similitudes and analogies that rolls through the world": and was perpetually amused to find that, salutary though the effects of such a reminder were, even that terrific sentence scarcely dimmed for a moment the ebullient gratification of his Prig,

who was incessantly chanting, "I am thinking all these things—I—I!"

This amusement was, of course, mainly pathological. His sense of actual cerebral disposition was acute and constantly employed. Indeed, one of his favourite recreations was to take a given statement, say Chesterton's declaration that a yawn is a silent yell, and map out the ideographical conditions necessarily obtaining for the production of such a phenomenon. But despite this keen curiosity in regard to the causation of such mental occurrences, although he became stored with unique lore in regard to psychological technique, he sought in vain for any clue towards understanding the selective instincts. Why a man should be set off on a particular line of thought he could account for easily, and the methods in which particular aspects of a case presented themselves to such and such a mind he was able to realise in the most meticulous photographic fashion, but why they should do so was a perpetual mystery upon which he could not secure the faintest light. He could find no centre of motivation and rebelled at times against this spring slavery. He likened himself to a lighted circle, a camp-fire, into which came all manner of waifs and strays from the surrounding imponderable night. Deviously

and incessantly, through many a mood that was sheerly pathological, in many an excursion which took him well over the recognised boundaries of sanity, he pursued his investigations. Still, all these mazy meticulated divagations were in his mind only what insect life is in the world as we see it, ubiquitous but infinitesimal. Another obscure ray he knew of which was fused in the broad light of his thought, and with the properties of which a tiny specialist-cell in his brain was constantly experimenting, emanating from his subtle realisation that beyond the individual mind of each man was a collective mind, quite different in its psychology, directed he could not imagine how, or to what ends, employing the symbols of religious systems, world politics and racial instincts. The little specialist was able to use this pretty much as a man uses electricity or radium. The consequence was that he was enabled, indefinably but quite definitely, to trace the thin line of his own mentality through all the incalculable fabric of the thought of humanity. This gave him latitude and longitude on the oceans of speculation.

At times, however, the unnatural aspect of this cerebral sense overcame him and he was seized with sensations akin to the sudden instability and nameless fear which overtake

investigators of psychic affairs. This had some horrible effects. The instantaneous realisation of unwholesome abnormality would vitiate all his speculative liveliness. Max Nordau and Lombroso would spring into his mind, and he would suddenly see his brain as a writhing mass of worms. One part would beat like a pulse, growing louder and louder—swell enormously —then burst, deluging his mind in warm blood. He was obsessed—then recovering from the terrible phantasy, nerveless and blanched, he would watch with painful realism the break-up of his mental life. Every one of his separate egos became violently anarchical, creating an unthinkable Babel. Disunity and internecine hostility tore him into shreds. This passing, he would darken into lethargy, thus eventually recovering his poise in sleep, and the memories of such crises were almost indistinguishable from nightmares. Similar at times was the effect of his sense of personal insignificance, of physical inadequacy—of having paralysed his creative faculties by over-reading—of being merely a "strong solution of books" as "full of quotations as Shakespeare"—and so forth, and, as will readily be discerned when his youth is remembered, even more pronouncedly was he thus affected by evidences of stupidity prospering and wickedness flourishing like the green bay

tree, and by the actual irrelevance of religion, education and art to the facts of life. On the other hand the more clearly participant in his mood the sense of the collective mind, the more comfortable he felt. Everything was then in proportion and perspective, and the humbling and depersonalising effect was soothing and helpful. But bother criticism when everything was really doing its very best so nicely! After all, these contrasting sentiments were only agreeable little differences between one right and another. He remembered a bit of a letter from his Aunt Sarah, concerning a railway journey: "I must say I always thought it a mistake for the Companies to stop at so *many* stations—people who want to get out at these are so selfish, keeping the other poor passengers packed in the train." Outside, in front of a red and green chemist's shop, a mongrel was going round and round in pursuit of its tail. He couldn't let any of these small issues dust over any least little bit of his intellectual clearness. In the coloured air he moderated with easy expertness an ethereal see-saw with a subtle pride of obscurity on one end and a glimmering recollection of S. Cyran on the other, and knew that he had solved the problem of perpetual motion. Strange, that within a hundred miles or so inside his brain or on the left of his head,

just for a bird's brief flight, there should be thoughts and feelings and experiences "a whole God's breadth apart"—"the breadth of death and life." Then, apropos, apparently of nothing, the Social Man who had travelled a great deal began saying how, when he was among the ostriches on the veld, he had often wondered how it happened that that bird in hiding its head in the sand should make *your* head so conspicuous. And the Working Journalist said, "How common these fanciful paradoxes are nowadays, to be sure." The furthest doubt flashed out again, and he felt almost as if he had dropped an "h." . . . He felt all these vaguer speculations reinforced and running in his blood like wine. *Was* thought then, as we knew it, a disease? he asked for the millionth time.

"Then felt ashamed as they who shout
When God's own silence is about,
And turned that he might hide his head
Because nothing was to be said."

And so, again, naturally he found all the more to say welling up from unplumbed depths in him. The seeker went off again on his mazy endless divagations:

"Oh, vanity of vanities
And following of wind
Through the dim avenues and deep
Abysses of the mind,
When would his ears be deaf at last,
When would his eyes be blind?

Oh, vanity of sorrowing
And emptiness of mirth
And wandering fires of thought in clay
Imprisoned at his birth,
When would the wandering fires go out
And earth return to earth?"

In the words of the Irishman "there was no beginning nor end to it, and it hadn't any bottom." He must soon tackle seriously this curious question with which he was always playing—why certain sensations and experiences will bear recalling over and over again without becoming exhausted, so that he could return to them after months or years or constantly, and always find entirely new bearings in them which had escaped him on the first occasion. It was most remarkable that this could go on happening time after time, giving extraordinary effects of internal infinitudes, while other sensations and experiences (more vivid and arrestive at the time, perhaps) were exhausted right away and could never be renewed—to all appearances, although, of course, he knew that even the most casual incident or impression could have an underground existence, working away like a mole, unobserved, yet in such a manner as to throw up heaps here and there, and in the most unlikely places. How was it possible that some phrase or concatenation of words, or run of colours, should bear within itself meaning after

meaning, horizon after horizon of significance and suggestion? Yet such was undoubtedly the case. Portions of his far-flung reading, certain recollections of landscape or house-furnishing, inflections of voices, smells, sounds, physical and mental sensations, had for him this inexhaustible germinative quality. He returned to them again and again (or they returned to him), and continually he found fresh interpretations lurking beneath the old and familiar facts. Was it like the difference between the actual solid shape of a mountain and the different views obtainable from different sides? Were these mountain-facts of his mental world imaged forth in such a way as to retain this quality of solidity, so that their outlines varied according to the angles at which he approached and reapproached them and the endless variations of his mind? None of these outlines were final, and the ultimate content remained behind and eluded them all. . . . But this was going far afield—and his article was finished.

II A MOMENT IN ETERNITY

(To George Ogilvie)

A MOMENT IN ETERNITY

THE great song ceased
—Aye, like a wind was gone,
And our hearts came to rest,
Singly as leaves do,
And every leaf a flame.

My shining passions stilled
Shone in the sudden peace
Like countless leaves
Tingling with the quick sap
Of Immortality.

I was a multitude of leaves
Receiving and reflecting light,
A burning bush
Blazing for ever unconsumed,
Nay, ceaselessly,
Multiplying in leaves and light
And instantly
Burgeoning in buds of brightness,
—Freeing like golden breaths
Upon the cordial air
A thousand new delights,
—Translucent leaves
Green with the goodness of Eternity,
Golden in the Heavenly light,
—The golden breaths
Of my eternal life,
Like happy memories multiplied,

Shining out instantly from me
And shining back for ever into me,
—Breaths given out
But still unlost,
For ever mine
In the infinite air,
The everlasting foliage of my soul
Visible awhile
Like steady and innumerable flames,
Blending into one blaze
Yet each distinct
With shining shadows of difference.

A sudden thought of God's
Came like a wind
Ever and again
Rippling them as waters over stars,
And swiftlier fanning them
And setting them a-dance,
Upflying, fluttering down,
Moving in orderly intricacies
Of colour and of light,
Delaying, hastening,
Blazing and serene,
Shaken and shining in the turning wind,
Lassoing cataracts of light
With rosy boughs,
Or clamouring in echoing unequalled heights,
Rhythmical sprays of many-coloured fire

And spires chimerical
Gleaming in fabulous airs,
And suddenly
Lapsing again
To incandescence and increase.

And again the wind came
Blowing me afar
In fair fantastic fires,
—Ivies and irises invading
The upland garths of ivory;
Queen daisies growing
In the tall red grass
By pools of perfect peace;
And bluebells tossing
In transparent fields;
And silver airs
Lifting the crystal sources in dim hills
And swinging them far out like bells of glass
Pealing pellucidly
And quivering in faery flights of chimes;
Shivers of wings bewildered
In alleys of virgin dream;
Floral dances and revels of radiance
Whirling in stainless sanctuaries;
And eyes of Seraphim,
Shining like sunbeams on eternal ice,
Lifted toward the unexplored
Summits of Paradise.

And the wind ceased.
Light dwelt in me,
Pavilioned there.
I was a crystal trunk,
Columnar in the glades of Paradise,
Bearing the luminous boughs
And foliaged with the flame
Of infinite and gracious growth,
—Meteors for roots,
And my topmost spires
Notes of enchanted light
Blind in the Godhead!
—White stars at noon!

I shone within my thoughts
As God within us shines.

And the wind came,
Multitudinous and light
I whirled in exultations inexpressible
—An unpictureable, clear,
Soaring and glorying,
Swift consciousness,
A cosmos turning like a song of spheres
On apices of praise,
A separate colour,
An essential element and conscious part
Of successive and stupendous dreams
In God's own heart!

A MOMENT IN ETERNITY

And the wind ceased
And like a light I stood,
A flame of glorious and complex resolve,
Within God's heart.

I knew then that a new tree,
A new tree and a strange,
Stood beautifully in Heaven.
I knew that a new light
Stood in God's heart
And a light unlike
The Twice Ten Thousand lights
That stood there,
Shining equally with me,
And giving and receiving increase of light
Like the flame that I was
Perpetually.
And I knew that when the wind rose
This new tree would stand still
Multiplied in light but motionless,
And I knew that when God dreamt
And His creative impulses
Ran through us like a wind
And we flew like clear and coloured
Flames in His dreams,
(Adorations, Gratitudes, and Joys,
Plenary and boon and pure,
Crystal and burning-gold and scarlet
Competing and co-operating flames

Reflecting His desires,
Flashing like epical imaginings
And burning virgin steeps
With ceaseless swift apotheoses)
One light would stand unmoved.

And when on pinnacles of praise
All others whirled
Like a white light deeper in God's heart
This light would shine,
Pondering the imponderable,
Revealing ever clearlier
Patterns of endless revels,
Each gesture freed,
Each shining shadow of difference,
Each subtle phase evolved
In the magnificent and numberless
Revelations of ecstasy
Succeeding and excelling inexhaustibly,
—A white light like a silence
Accentuating the great songs!
—A shining silence wherein God
Might see as in a mirror
The miracles that He must next achieve!

Ah, Light,
That is God's inmost wish,
His knowledge of Himself,
Flame of creative judgment,
God's interrogation of infinity,

A MOMENT IN ETERNITY

Searching the unsearchable,
—Silent and steadfast tree
Housing no birds of song,
Void to the wind,
But rooted in God's very self,
Growing ineffably,
Central in Paradise!

When the song ceased
And I stood still,
Breathing new leaves of life
Upon the eternal air,
Each leaf of all my leaves
Shone with a new delight
Murmuring Your name.

O Thou,
Who art the wisdom of the God
Whose ecstasies we are!

III CAFÉ SCENE

CAFÉ SCENE

"He wanders lonely as a cloud."

HE caught sight of himself in a long narrow mirror—practically a full-length reflection, so vivid that it seemed to thrust upon him almost with vehemence a sense of responsibility for his own identity: as he invariably (almost invariably—there had been times unfortunately—but . . .), if less intrusively did at this point, just passing the glittering unsteady counter, scintillating and swaying there, into the comparative twilight of the (to-day somewhat improbably narrow) neck which attached the front shop to the long narrow tea-room behind: and this glance at his external appearance gave him, he perceived with resigned contempt, despite the unnecessary over-emphasis of his physical actuality, an odd irrational sensation of reassurance, a mere animal assumption that with such a composed and natural (whatever that might mean) look on his face, his state of mind could not really be so terribly seismic and unsafe as he had with a sensation of blanching and blenching (equally irrational—a mere intellectual presumption—mind and matter it seemed must always be playing this little game of over-rating themselves and under-rating each other) felt it to be a moment earlier . . . all the afternoon, indeed, a peculiar and unsupportable condition when the most casual

sounds seemed charged with secret and sinister inflections, most ordinary objects endowed with unthinkable and malign properties, the processes of his brain obscurely altered, the selective methods of his senses subtly different.

Faces that ordinarily his eyes would have passed over without registering any definite impression had come round all sorts of corners, leaping out of crowds in the most inconsequent and inexplicable fashion, and fastened themselves upon his unsteady brain—silly faces that he felt would haunt him for ever, particularly that impossible old policeman . . . no, that lean girl with the butter-coloured hair was the worst, a masterpiece of indecent cleverness in visual realism! And faces that his eyes had to his relief actually passed over seemed instead to have entered some optical side-door, and long after he had passed their possessors surprised his consciousness in the most outrageous fashion, alarming afterthoughts violently spatchcocked into his very soul.

And it hadn't been faces only. Corners of houses had split into his thoughts like an elbow in the ribs. The glittering motion of a bicycle wheel had communicated a wild dizziness and when deflected to circumvent an omnibus given him an extraordinary feeling of having launched into an insane aberration. All sorts of

little everyday things, disproportioned and bedevilled, were picked out by his eyes as if in a spirit of capricious and cruel caricature. That sewing-machine now—a standard make, a world-famous machine, why had it afflicted him with such an agitated and exaggerated sense of its infinite clicking throbbing capacity to irritate just as if his nerves had been passed endlessly under the needle stitching every little quivering bit of sentience into some fantastic pattern of wanton agony? . . . The flaming effrontery of a bunch of cheap roses, brutally red! The hot offensive dampness of an afternoon edition! (He had tried to read a perfectly plain little paragraph of news and had not been able to understand a single word of it, any more than if it had been in Chinese or part of the leader, and the shape and size of the paragraph set in a column of similar paragraphs in a quite normal way had affected him as bizarre geometrical experiments which had signally failed!) A line between two flagstones on the pavement, suddenly a yawning chasm! A cough behind him which gave him the feeling of having been buried under an avalanche! Feet splaying at angles suggestive of the most irreconcilable and meaningless divergences! A tall man instantly precipitous! A woman's waist expanding equatorially! Hands like starfish or stars! Noses like

fallen towers! Eddies and undercurrents and cataracts of eyes! Feet under which the ground fluttered like paper! Voices that struck him as if he had been a gong—voices that tortured him as if they had been ferrets and he a rabbit-warren—voices that were charged with astounding and unintelligible prophecies, accusations, threats and pleas.

He could not even now, however, help looking at his feet. The mirror cut him off just below the knees with a vicious effect of unnecessary amputation.... Of course, his feet were all right down there; shining blackly. What could have happened to them, anyhow, he asked himself bitterly—to move as one? eh? Or to have the boots that encased them go suddenly green or purple? Why the devil must his brain go on tweaking out logical processes to impossible lengths? He was entering (he impressed upon himself firmly and quietly) just the same old room he always entered at tea-time, and, of course, everything was really just as usual (except perhaps that the tea-cups appeared to be twinkling with an unusual rapidity and the little circular tables to be going round at such an intense speed that they deceived the eye, any eye but his, with a seeming immobility! He knew instinctively that if he put a finger on one of them, however delicately, there would be

a distinct buzz). And he himself, with a sense of shaking his brain vigorously, was just as usual, the same look on his face, the same way of balancing his flesh on his bones, the same slow, quiet gait—this haunting sense of stealthiness was quite unfounded—and in a second or two he would be sitting in his usual chair in the corner yonder, sipping his tea and eating his favourite cakes, nodding to the usual people and having the usual feelings.

Without a doubt!—but an extraordinary sense of intolerable belittlement assailed him between the first little table he had to pass and the second, so congesting and compressing his organs that he felt that he was fighting for breath. It was as if a dwarfing process had set it. He would soon have no more stature than a fly. He found time, with a sense of extraordinary mental agility, to reflect that probably his feelings were quite similar to those which must have afflicted those luckless wights in the fairy tales just at the moment when they were being transformed into pigs or pansies.

A titanic figure heaved past him, looming up above his shoulder to his nervous sidelong glance like a thundercloud, a great and oppressive phenomenon, discharging a dark incalculable belligerency directed against the world at large, it seemed, and only incidentally and for-

tuitously against himself, a doom-dark shape, billowy and lowering, like nightfall and a storm at sea.

He took once more (quaintly conscious of courageousness and even a little amused by his hasty search for symbols and figures of speech sufficiently enormous) a grip of himself, discerning in every mode of his bodily and mental functioning a diathesis of sheer unreason, in which the slightest incident or impression, negligently admitted, might set up unthinkable conditions of terror. Every cell of his body and his brain seemed, separately and conjointly, poised on the very edge of an unknown that was both ludicrous and fatal. . . .

He so impressed himself with the need for intense caution that a second later he found himself staring at the perforated cane bottom of a chair with a powerful fixity as if daring it to declare its hidden nature and do its worst.

He had difficulty in tearing his eyes away from it. There were nineteen little round holes in that atrocious lemon-coloured disk of seating, surrounded by a tight round red cane, and mounted on slim curving legs—three of them!

A preposterous joke imperilled the foundations of his consciousness with its fortuitous folly. "Three legs—the Manx device—a Hall Caine chair!"

CAFÉ SCENE

His internal agitation communicated itself to his lips in what was probably but a sardonic and suffering smile, but what (caught in another convenient mirror) appeared to those insufferable and dilating eyes of his, swinging like lanterns, like a wild and dangerous hazard of his facial muscles. There was no knowing where it might stop. It might continue until like the Cheshire Cat he hung on the atmosphere in but a grin. The corners of his lips appeared to be giving way, slitting silently and unresistingly, threatening his ears. . . .

An intense but utterly impersonal interest in this physiognomical phenomenon grew painfully within him—then abruptly and painlessly deserted him. All at once it was as if he had lost his face or had never possessed one. . . . He knew that he had noticed that the Thundercloud (who had passed him darkly and heavily just before that wretched chair had arrested his irresponsible eyes with its irrelevant triped antics) was poised there on his favourite chair in the corner, the old corner yonder—banked up into it blackly, sitting there like Hell itself!

He sat down on the nearest chair—any chair, any table! Nothing mattered now. Destiny was unmistakably upon him and would have its way with him. He must let things take their course. If it had been ordained, set down against his

soul and this place and day and hour from the commencement of time, that he must look at things from an unaccustomed angle, see the unfamiliar and unsuspected aspects of all the everyday unfamiliar things that in the sinful arrogance of his individuality he had taken as fixed and fundamental, given and unchanging, it did not matter what sort of angle it was. It was certain to be acute. Geometry be damned! "Thunder!" He heard his absurd soul telling itself in its pitiful bewilderment, "Thunder!" Stuff and nonsense! It was only a big man, a very big and stout and brutal-looking man, dark hair, dark moustache, blue-black chin, a swarthy and overweighted face . . . but only a man! It wasn't a bit of good though. His lost soul kept muttering "Thunder!" "Thunder!" as if in amazed and impotent recognition—Thunder about to devour cream cookies in a black and purposive fashion, a tenebrous and terrible tea-taker!

Then the girl came in—a white-faced slip of a thing, emphasising her anæmia with a scarlet blouse without regard to his feelings. No! It was not culpable thoughtlessness on her part. Something in the apologetic bend of her neck suggested that she was pitifully sorry that she was quite incapable of regulating the effect she must incidentally produce, miserably and

hopelessly concentrated as she was through no fault of her own on being a pallid, insignificant wraith of a woman, a complex and colourless business. Her whole being seemed to cry out to him and to the world in general, in a white tenuous voice, "Don't take any notice! I am very sorry, but for reasons which I cannot express, and which in any case you would not understand—not because of any mental deficiency on your part, but because they are essentially unknowledgeable—I must go on, day in and day out, year in and year out, bleaching away. And I must take tea somewhere, that being so, mustn't I now—as a reasonable man, mustn't I? . . . In another Café? What difference would that make? To you, personally, selfishly, yes! . . . but, generally speaking, considering the effect of my unspeakable *ensemble* on human eyes as a whole? I'll be perfectly quiet—don't look at me: I shall only go whiter and whiter if you do, you know—or rather you don't know: believe me: my power of blanching is boundless—I'll be perfectly quiet and I won't be long—just a cup of tea and a couple of buns and I shall cease to blight the air about you in this ghastly, unforgivable but imperatively, if incomprehensibly, necessary fashion!"

A sense of dreary goodwill invaded him as

he looked at her. It was as if his soul replied, going over and bending earnestly above her bloodless but invincible countenance. "Sh! Not a word! I know. Don't mind me. Why should I object to your going into a decline just because I happen to be having tea? There's no law compelling young females to carry blood in their faces or, for the matter of that, elsewhere. It's fashionable, of course, but still. . . .! Quiver away for all you are worth, my dear. You are but a human aspen really. A human aspen faint and frail! Never you mind! Your pallor is almost pleasant, really. . . . Now, what I do object to is an inimical immensity like that . . .," waving a differentiating finger cornerwards.

The Thundercloud had ordered tea—tea, in a reverberating roar, as if he were pandering brazenly in public to some unmentionable vice. In the aspect of the waitress (a deft and pleasant servant he had always hitherto thought her) hastening to execute the deafening order there was a revolting servility. She shot soullessly along between the tables with a vile velocity. It was almost as if a flash of lightning had emanated from the growling darkness in the corner.

Then he saw an indistinct shape hovering hesitantly—heard the sigh of a spiritless zephyr

—and knew that what had really happened had been that the other waitress (who had always hitherto appeared to him sufficiently well embodied) had taken the girl's order. Indeed it must have been so: for in a few moments a small teapot decadently green, a plate of shadowy-looking brown bread and butter and other obscure paraphernalia, dimly coloured and insecurely shaped, of a negligible repast, had forgathered mistily in front of this little white ghost of all the sorrow in the world, whose glimmering hands were apparently making ineffectual passes over and amongst them, an impotent and pitiable ritual, incapable of producing that ancient magic, that friendly and familiar faerie of tinkling metal and shining delf, for which the unhappy girl was in all likelihood desperately striving.

"Bread cast upon dark waters!" he found himself murmuring (could it be audibly?), thinking of the contrast between her tentative fastidious mastication—little bites that were so nearly invisible that they might have been imaginary, tiny sips that involved so little movement of her lips that the cup might most likely have been empty—and the hideous fashion in which ball after ball of bread and bun and draught after draught of tea were lost in some desperate juggling trick, swallowed up

and lost in that looming darkness, sitting accumulating in the corner there.

He could not remember having ordered tea himself or having had it brought to him. How much he had already eaten there was no possible telling. As if he had turned a sharp corner and run into himself again, he was horrified to find that he had to all appearances swallowed a great cake whole. . . . He had just caught a glimpse of it being automatically put to his lips by a nonchalant hand: and now it had vanished as if it had never been. Could it have been only an optical illusion? He would know when he got his bill. Madeira cakes, one? Surely not! Hastily seizing his cup he drained it empty in one desperate gulp. Somehow on restoring the cup to the saucer his arm descended with involuntary violence. He had forgotten that the table was rotating at a dizzy rate. Yet, curiously, nothing happened. If he had been subjected to a volley of china splinters, or if the cup had swerved and shot off into space, at least he would have been able to understand it. Was the operation of all natural laws suspended? Beads of sweat started out on his brow. In a moment or two he felt as if he was holding his head under a pouring tap. This was intolerable. He must know one way or another without delay if he was to preserve his sanity. He seized

the cup again—a thin cynical light was playing round its fluted body—raised it high above his head, then brought it down with full force—and there it was nesting peacefully in its saucer, intact! Were his thoughts moving so rapidly that he had only imagined he had subjected it to this test—or had the fragile, evil-gleaming vessel actually survived it? How could he really determine? To think the matter carefully out he put his elbow on the table (what did it matter suppose the friction should set fire to his sleeve?) and pillowed his head on his hand, feeling like Atlas during an earthquake.

Just as he was getting the pros and cons of the unspeakable problem carefully and clearly arranged in his mind, however, another matter of precedent urgency presented itself. Leaning forward in this new position he caught a glimpse in another mirror (the place was like that Bar of Bennett's "all whisky and looking-glasses") of an extraordinary exhibition of necromancy, the effect of a composite reflection bridging the space in some subtle and sinister fashion between the doom-dark figure in the corner and the phantasmal female, and thus (secretly) the baneful figure of evil was making deliberate and incomprehensible passes above her witless head, with (of all the instruments of sorcery) a tea-cup, held loosely in an enormous dark and

hairy fist, on the middle finger of which gleamed a yellow ring set with a huge and baleful emerald. With his eyes starting out of his head and his brain repeating and repeating helplessly, "And this, mind you, in a well-known tea-shop, one which I have frequented for years and years . . . the diabolical ingenuity of it . . .," he watched these Satanic machinations, the tea-cup swinging above the piteous unprotected head like a Damoclean sword and all behind and around Egyptian darkness.

"The defencelessness of woman!" he said to himself, muttering tensely, and excitedly conscious that he was making up his mind for some inconceivable action of knight-errantry.

He rose as if with a wild leap—almost as if shot out by some catapultic motion of the chair. Why on earth had he done so? He now perceived that what had actuated him had been the fact that the girl and the giant had also arisen, in fact just a second or two before he had, and were now moving out of the tea-room into the front shop. But was the girl there? The broad back of the man, ballooning blackly, blotted out from his view whatever might be in front. He followed breathlessly. Was he really running? He could not be sure. At the pay-desk he almost cannoned into the giant, who was throwing down great clangorous coins upon the

vibrant counter. With incredible dexterity he contrived to thrust his head round a pillar of a leg in a cunning effort to discover if the girl was in front, but the giant frustrated his intention with a sudden movement which made him feel he had lost his sight. . . . Blinking, a second later, or how long, he found himself alone, floating it seemed in a sea of suspicion. That was how the cash-girl's face affected him, as if he had been guilty of some monstrous solecism. With a mighty effort he pulled himself together —worlds might go smash but bills must be met —he fumbled in his pockets for coins which eluded him in a manner that, to say the least of it, was excessively ill-timed. Finally his fingers closed on a great round of metal, and he drew it forth, and with an air of mastery which he instantaneously felt had been crassly premature, tossed it on the throbbing counter. . . . With the royal, if fateful clangour of the giant's pieces, which had clashed like mighty shields, still in his ears, it was with a sense of incontinent horror that he heard the inexplicable boom, a very echo, as it were, of the hollowness of life. . . . Years after, he remembered that, stunned in a way as he was, he had yet contrived to reflect on how much the human brain will stand. A second later he knew (though he had no earthly notion of how he had done it) that he had apologised

to the cash-girl, tendered true money, noticed a familiar picture endowed with a second meaning which somehow escaped him, and received his change and countless excruciating and simultaneous impressions ranging from a feminine eyebrow twisted into the shape of a question mark to a sense of his boots rooting to the tiles of the floor.

With a sensation of tearing himself up with a soaring motion of his shoulders he flew to the door. Not a soul was in sight! Anything might have happened. Only the worst—an indefinable and unthinkable worst—was thinkable. The street had a mocking emptiness. He seemed to be gazing down a corridor in interstellar space.

A waitress ran up to where he stood poised on the threshold as if on the edge of a fathomless abyss, tendering his hat, which he had forgotten.

He took it dumbly, trying to look at her but finding nothing on which to fasten his eyes; and walked slowly and unsteadily away, carrying his hat in a petrified hand.

IV THE FOOL

THE FOOL

HE said that he was God.
"We are well met," I cried,
"I've always hoped I should
Meet God before I died."

I slew him then and cast
His corpse into a pool,
—But how I wish he had
Indeed been God, the fool!

V A FOUR YEARS' HARVEST

FOUR YEARS' HARVEST

I

"O Memory, Lord of broken and broadcast
Fragments of life, like scattered cyclades
Set in the dark illimitable seas
Of Time." . . .

THE crisis was over once again—once again. He lit his pipe which had gone out. The struck match gleamed cheerfully and the atmosphere seemed to throb as he sucked at the stem. The window was open.* Vast and awful shapes of cloud with clear-cut edges were cleaving their way across the sky, spreading like enormous fans. All the light that had flooded the heavens seemed to be concentrating before the menacing advances into such random patches as were yet uninvaded, so that an interstice in the ragged purple here, an irregular belt just above the horizon there, had a peculiar ghastliness as of some human disease. The world was full of the

"Red darkness of the hearts of roses,
Blue brilliant from dead starless skies,
And gold that lies behind the eyes,
The unknown unnameable sightless white
That is the essential flame of night,
Lustreless purple, hooded green,
The myriad hues that lie between
Darkness and darkness. . . ."

With what an abruptness storms sprang from the blue at this season here! All at once a change had made itself felt. The sunshine seemed less

* Sections Lahore Indian General Hospital, Sergeants' Mess, Marseilles.

brilliant, the shadows less solidly, less sharply etched. Very slight, very uncertain! It required close scrutiny for assurance that it was not fancied,—a change in his blood! The sky might have been ransacked to discover the smallest shred of cloud: but never so faint a gauze had been drawn over the face of the sun, faintly bedimming without obscuring it. At the same time the air which had been hot all day, hot but buoyant, stimulant, seemed to become thick, sluggish, suffocating—to yield up its vital principle and fall a dead weight on the earth. And this effect was accompanied by a sudden silence.

Not a bird twittered! Not a leaf rustled! The world held its breath. And his thought that went on babbling, babbling, was a very part of the silence, accentuating and underscoring it. Still no rack of cloud was anywhere discernible. . . .

Then suddenly the higher grounds were lapped in obscurity. The cloud spread, and sank, cancelling the sun, shrouding Cap Janet to its waist, curling in smoky wreaths among the houses of Les Abbatoirs and La Calade aloft yonder; turning the sea from sapphire to steel; filling the entire valley with a strange mixture of darkness and pallid light.

Overhead it hung like a vast canopy of leaden-

hued cotton-wool: westward it had a fringe of fiery crimson beyond which a strip of clear sky on the horizon diffused a chill metallic yellow like tarnished brass. . . . His window looked to the East: but still he knew that it had been so. He had felt the fronts of his teeth disproportionately black. . . . Then there was a violent gust of wind, cold, scattering everything before it, dust, dried leaves, the fallen petals snow-like of fruit-tree blossoms; making the trees writhe and labour like wrestlers in grips with invisible opponents; making the short grass and his hair shudder; corrugating his brow and the surface of the bay.

> "And the dark fell. There grew
> Himward a sound of shaken boughs
> And ceased above his intricate house."

The lightning tore through the dark cloud canopy in long blinding zigzags. The wind moaned, howled, hooted, and the chamber in which he sat was full of the chill and the smell of it.

So the storm had begun, and still the lightning played torturingly across the swart swelling bosom, and a muttering of thunder came as from a throbbing heart within it. It looked quite solid and he thought, "If it reaches that electric light down there struggling so fiercely it will surely fall and then. . . ."

A flock of night-birds passed, flying low and swift. He could hear their quills beating the air and they cried to one another. The black geometry of the system of breakwaters in the bay was a congeries of moulds holding the dulling lead of the seas. Farther out a dark mist hid the Château D'If and the islands. Just outside the window—an outstretched hand could touch them—the stripped boughs of a poplar were swelling and rippling like negroid muscles. A mass of green-black shrubbery hid the base of Cap Janet but a sudden irradiation of yellow in the thick leaves told of a tramcar rounding the hidden corner. He rose and moved to the window. Yellow lights gleamed in the stormy chiaroscuro—a smoking shell—of the Abbatoirs quarter up the hill. A wrinkled bit of the steep water-worn ascent was discernible in the thin light of a couple of lamps. Just below him the tents were ghostly shapes like fallen and faded moons. From behind the yellow squares of the little windows of the Indian Y.M.C.A. hut at the bottom of the hospital grounds, inexpressibly remote as it seemed, came the crying of strings, a screeching lugubrious and fierce in its alien transport, as if it were mocking his sad and earnest conviction of irrelevant inevitability, the crowning torment and inward pride of his dexterous and irrepressible intel-

lectuality. Bhim Dyal, probably, the mad little Gurkha, strummed with vertiginous speed, with fury, and the distracted clamour of his voice wrestling madly with the ringing madness of the strings ended in a piercing and supreme shriek. A low and applauding murmur flowed to his ears—the austere acclamations of connoisseurs. He depicted to himself their shapes, squatting thickly round the music-makers, their fierce gesticulations, their ear-rings, bound heads, the incomprehensible expressions on their brown grimacing faces, whitening with sudden teeth.

In the tension of his imagination he beheld them as plainly as anything seen with the eyes of the body, and with his sharpened hearing catching every word with preternatural distinctness, felt as if, with the ring of Gyges on his finger, he actually squatted in their midst. Nor was he able to disengage his attention, it seemed —his ears were apparently held by this barbaric cacophony (which, proceeding doubtless all the while, he had not previously heard) as by some ancient mariner's eye of glittering insane sound. . . . The gay truculence of the hollow knocking, the metallic jingle, the shrill trolling, went on crescendo to a burst of babbling voices, a mad speed of tinkling, a thundering shout. . . . The sudden silence pulsated with the ponderous strokes of his heart.

Then there came a sound of men laughing ("honest English laughter!"—he had a ridiculous imitative sensation in his own throat, as if some physiological memory had been sympathetically excited) in the Rest Camp across the way. He sat down again some way back from the window, feeling more than ever cut off and desolate. In the darkness of his mind (as if something of the darkness and wildness of the night had struck in upon him) swirled the fallen leaves of his thoughts.

II

He had a fancy that many of them (and by "them" he meant that section of the "interpreting class," as John Buchan termed it, who had been actually in the Army and overseas during the greater part of the war) when finally restored to their "old ways of doing" would look back upon those years of war pretty much as a man looks back across the gulf which a sudden serious illness cuts into the familiar landscape of his life. "Though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels we shall not be listened to unless we prepare for ourselves a hearing." It was difficult enough to listen to himself as it was. He was conscious of the bewildering hopelessness of trying to sort out his impressions and come to any considered conclusion.

Looking in upon himself, working away feverishly in that teeming brain of his at any section of this multitudinous task, he realised with unerring instinct that he was capable at best of being even to himself in his final attitude, whatever that might be, only glittering but ill-poised, sincere but unconvincing.

Malloch and he were agreed that the real literature of the war could not possibly be written for a few years—possibly for a good few years—if ever. They had not come to that momentous conclusion without wrestling mightily with themselves. But it was ineludible—he following himself with an air of indignant mystery, Malloch glaring whitely through his spectacles.

He recollected with a painful embittered reluctance the chorus in the Bacchæ:—

> "Knowledge, we are not foes!
> I seek thee diligently
> But the world with a great wind blows
> Shining, and not from thee;
> Blowing to beautiful things
> On amid dark and light,
> Till life, through the trammellings
> Of Laws that are not the Right,
> Breaks clean and pure and sings
> Glorying to God on the height!"

He found it impossible to express, even with any minimum of intelligibility, his consuming sense of the utter and impermissible estrangement of practically all that had been spoken or

written—thought was perhaps another matter!—about the war from the facts as he had seen them, in Macedonia, in Italy, and in France,—or to indicate the cause of the desperate and agonising impotence that seized him whenever he was constrained (as he was so continually, so inexorably) to consider the ways and means by which his experiences might ever become even in the remotest degree—no, not acceptable—but merely expressible. So great was the conspiracy of misunderstanding that even general knowledge (to soldiers) on various aspects of the subject was as incapable of proof, or citation (to non-soldiers), as the theory of a new dimension.

A few months ago various correspondents had taken a young English writer (Alec Waugh) severely to task for an article on "How the Soldier saw the War." The reception accorded to that article, and the impression which he knew it had created in the minds of friends of his own who had read it and who by all pre-war standards were accounted intelligent and high-spirited men—made him shudder to think of the morass of useless misunderstanding into which he would plunge if he ever managed to put upon paper any record of how he saw the war.

Not yet, if ever, could he realise the desire a friend had expressed when he wrote, apropos of certain wildly unrelated manuscripts he

had sent him from Salonika: "There may be a method in your madness an old fogey like me cannot be expected to detect. I am ever in danger of underrating the strength of tide in these new times, and of forgetting that your inconsequent excursions may subtly represent the many and diverse channels it is cutting out for itself in minds like yours. Still, to continue the figure, I don't want your 'bore' to run to sea in a delta, but in a broad and navigable waterway wherein we may anchor one day to our great delight."

Not yet, if ever!

III

A bit of another soldier's letter occurred to him as, at a loss, peering out into the storm and the night he reflected that, in Conrad's figure, the few gas-lamps on the up-way to the Abbatoirs, showing up a bit of brickwork here and there, a fragment of tree-trunk, a flight of stone steps, an angle of a house, appeared in the blackness like penny dips in a range of cellars.

"It will be of little use, I suppose, asking you to spare a moment from making the millennium out of recast German guns to consider the woes of a soldier. But spare it if you can. I wish to forget that it is Christmas Day and to call it only the 25th of December of any old year. So I want a book or two. You who are so happy at

home now you have won the war don't know how we feel out here. I feel about as victorious as yesterday's *Daily Mail* in a horsepond. Compared with me the man who never smiled again would have brought the house down at Hengler's. I am not going to explain to one of the heroes why that is so—but send a book or two quick. No blessed novels. No Dickens. Don't be funny either and send me Bairnsfather or things of the giddy kind. But I should like some old voyages if you know how to lay hands on them. I don't mean Stevenson or anything this side of 1870. Something without a comment in it, like Bates, only further back. In your exhilaration do bear me in mind and act at once; for now the silence has settled on us survivors, we are inclined to be rather thoughtful while still out here. . . ."

Old travels!

"I too have prayed to feel desire no more,
To find in little things a small content,
No longer from the green and friendly shore
To swim a waif in the huge element.
My spirit darkens, my heart beats fitfully:
A power descends upon my soul and shakes
The calm of tranquillising song and breaks
The doom-dark wave of passion over me,
And every tumult in my being wakes;
A power not friendly to me but divine
Troubles the current of my trembling line."

Not for him the other side of 1870—or of

1914—whatever might betide! . . . . There was always this reviving trust in a centre of unity, a reassembling of his faculties for action in the faith that some inner purpose would be developed and confirmed. He believed recurrently that his own thought was part of the consciousness which sustained the world, and he expected to find a rational quality in its final outlines as well as in human history. He started anew from himself around an anthropomorphic universe, and went in search of a larger self which was the reflection and confirmation of his own (thus temporarily chastened) . . . an impulse this deeper than all philosophy . . . but, just because it lay so deep, it conflicted with another tendency equally ingrained in him, the impulse of revolt against "the pale cast of thought," the feeling that if he could only escape from his mind's anticipations he should find himself face to face with things as they really were. . . . Could he never do justice both to himself and to what was independent of him? . . . . Anyhow he was continually hauled back in a most humiliating way from wherever his thoughts had carried him to what was simply given—his poverty, his comparative ignorance, his follies and inequalities—torn away from contemplation of this over self which was dazzling, and from the thought which magnified its preconceptions.

His thoughts were like a flock of grebe. . . . He remembered an article he had written about nine months ago: Why has so little War-poetry been produced in Salonika? The leisure for thought is greater than on the Western Front, but then war-poetry soars like a bird with shining wings out of a dark and tangled thicket of tumult and despair. Is it that the close perils and constant high excitations of Flanders intensify feeling to poetic pitch while on the contrary the comparative stagnation and monotony and gruesome dull routine of disease and misadventurous death, unaccompanied by the flame of guns and the glitter of steel, blunt the perceptions? The truth cannot be here, because in point of fact, although the difficulties and dangers of the two campaigns are entirely different in character the same great elemental factors are through each working constantly in the minds of sensitive participants—the sacrifice of youth, the long, hard separations of lovers, the rush of death, the insupportability of the apparent triumph of the powers of darkness, the deep thoughts in the sentinel night, the sharpened memories of home constantly coming with an unspeakable newness, that strictly professional feeling, difficult to define, peculiar to the imaginative callings whose primary appeal lay in the suggestion of helpless opening

to incalculable revelation, in the suggestion of restless adventure, a sense of waiting upon an event secret from their knowledge, longer than the measure of their experience, an aspect as from a strange world, not only infinitely remote but superior with a greater destiny,

"chimerical with gathered lives."

And their further exile should surely have produced nostalgic poetry of even a more spear-like poignancy and slender gleaming desire than the wonderful poems of home-thought with which soldiers on the Western Front had imperishably enriched their literature. Think, too, of the wonderful associations of Salonika, with "high Olympus" across the blue and silver waters of the gulf. The slightest tendency to poetical expression could surely not lie fallow there.

It would be an easy enough matter for a deft historian in the days to be, when the official documents were available and the censorship no longer applied, to detail accurately the complicated course of the campaign, but a pen no less subtle, a sense of colour and psychology no less delicate and infallible than that of a Pierre Loti, a Theophile Gautier or a Lafcadio Hearn would be needed in the writer who was to reproduce for posterity the atmosphere of the Salonika front.

For the soldier the rush of impressions had been tremendous, beyond the possibility of assimilation. The course of events had been so rapid and so tortuous withal that it had been well-nigh impossible to follow it, although paradoxically it had often been their complaint that "nothing ever happens out here"—their common excuse for meagre and unsatisfactory letters home, and true enough in its own way too—and equally strangely the impression had obtained at home that but for the prevalence of certain diseases life in Salonika would have been little short of a picnic. Salonika during these times had been perhaps the most cosmopolitan city the world had ever seen. What Boyd Cable or "Sapper" had done for the Western Front only very much more dexterous penmen could have accomplished for Salonika. It would have taxed the pen of a Henry James to do justice to its intricate contrasts, its amazing juxtapositions, its colourful complexity—a Henry James with a richer spiritual sense! "Ole Bill" was unknown. A Beardsley and not a Bairnsfather was demanded. A bloodless Revolution and one of the world's greatest conflagrations had been dates in their diaries. They had grown familiar with life and death in every shape and form, praying one instant for additional skull space to cope with the onrush of novel and ex-

citing impressions, and the next confessing to an abject sterility of mind incapable of maintaining a passably decent correspondence, whilst at home "man in the street opinions" swung between finding them an insoluble enigma, the victims of another "error of judgment" or holiday makers.

On all sides the mind was baffled by paradox —the incredible malignancy of a city which outwardly was so wondrously fair, with its white minarets set in cypress bowers gleaming in some magical Eastern sunrise ("Geometry, lines and planes, smooth edges, the ordered horror of perspectives.... In this country there are pavements bright and sleek as water. The walls are precipices to which giants have nailed a perpetual cataract of marble"). The incalculable treachery of weather which in one day could produce cases of heat-stroke and frost-bite; the incomprehensibility of a campaign which bustled so tremendously and variedly at the base and was apparently lost in impenetrable mists up the line; the impossibility of determining whether they were a superfluous side-show, or, as the Bosche boasted, "the cheapest internment camp they had"; the co-existent sensation of living on a volcano edge and of being bored to death on a front comparatively uneventful to others; and so on. After a few

months out there a famous scientist had declared every man became slightly "puggled," some malignant endemic influence destroying a tiny cerebral membrane—and he believed the statement to be true. One became unable to size things up: a curious vein of impotence in thought manifested itself. Everybody was either ill, sickening for an illness or convalescent. The pathological element was everywhere abominably intrusive. Mails ran so irregularly: censorship was so strict, and news either so limited or so belated and always so untrustworthy that a curious sensation of being marooned in a Kathleen Mavourneen manner was produced. The absence of accurate information created an unstable atmosphere in which credulity and cynicism acted as cyclone and anti-cyclone. The total effect created by the accumulation of all these obscure and unusual factors on the psychology of the troops, varying with each individual soldier, was scarcely describable, but the general sensation was of a highly-coloured nightmarish unreality.

The feat of transforming a raw recruit into an effective soldier was a very elementary exercise compared with that of adapting one's mind to the polychromatic chaos there—and the average British mind, lacking chameleon-power, confessed to a feeling of bewilderment and

stultification full of unseizable qualities and with a general mental effect as different from any it had received before as a Japanese painting was from the accustomed oleograph at home. Infrequent and independable links of correspondence scarcely held their hearts to their old moorings against tides of inverted incredulity. One's former life haunted one almost like an undemonstrable belief in a fourth dimension. There was no obvious connection between past and present. Now seemed hopelessly at variance with then. . . .

There had been that Frenchman's Diary in Hospital: "The atmosphere all afternoon has been heavy with thunder and my nerves have vibrated the more in accord with the electricity charging the air, the peals of thunder synchronising with the pulsations of my blood under the bandages. I see the sky as one great grey blotting-pad against which the branches of the trees appear like gashes of ink. About 8 o'clock the storm which has burdened our blood all day breaks at last. We have never seen the like in Salonika. The garden rattles with the shrapnel of the heavy drops. The branches are weighed down. The long leaves are streaming. Electric wires that their weight and the wind bring into contact fuse suddenly. And the formidable claps of thunder roll in the violet mountains

which make the northern horizon, just as in the bay, where our boats dance like walnut shells, mauve glimmers or flashes of lightning swiftly illumine the shadows. After the storm there is an appeasement unknown till then. Oppressed lungs breathe freely. The wet earth exhales a heavy and healthy smell. The sky has regained its infinite limpidity and in the calm night I dream and I can at last write. . . ." "When one mounts the curve of a hillock and looks towards the sea, there is in the air, clear and pure after yesterday's rains, a brilliancy of light which fills the eyes. On the right lies the city and its white minarets like an army of house-tops which goes to assault the old red walls with which the Turks fortified the summit of the hill. In front lies the gulf, its curving blue speckled with the straggling uneven shadows of our ships, and the sun is setting between Olympus, and the city among pale reds and old gold. As the night grows cooler, in the calm garden where I dream my dreams, behind the spikes of a cactus I feel for an hour as if this is my own little kingdom. . . ." "Through the open door I can see through the garden almost at the height of my eyes clusters of flowers laid out in squares, a quadrangle shaded by the stout branches and heavy blossoms of an acacia, the foliage of which fills the rest of the field of my

vision. At its roots at the bottom of the garden behind a thin hedge a low railing separates us from the street where the commotions of life continue despite our repose—an uninterrupted procession of passers-by, tramway cars, automobiles. And it is a strange contrast, this ceaseless feverish cacophony of the boulevard of Queen Olga and the four hundred foot square little garden where a blackbird, preoccupied and grave, walks by itself! . . . . Between the branches the sky has a great intensity. One by one the stars come out. In the chequered twilight, and where rays of light run, gentle white figures flit, and, suffering in the great sweetness of the falling night, I understand in a sense, impossible in happier, heedless days, the goodness of Woman."

And he thought how he had thought of Peggy three thousand miles and more away—

"I have found in my lady many beautiful things:
The dawn-glad song of the bird and its light quick flutter of wings
And passionate joy in living a life that sings."

And of how, invalided home, he had married her . . . and the verse that came to his mind (his eyes bright as the eyes of a lizard, his lips shut very tightly, a colourless face with a curious fulness at the corners of the tucked-in mouth,

folded about the stem of his pipe, which isolated the expression)—

"You are truth and the world is illusion: faith, it is doubt,
It wraps its disaster in darkness and you shine out,
And the liquor that drugs to endurance is not for your drought.
Pass on to the waste and the fells! I stay and forget
Your breasts and your hair and your laughter like suns that are set,
Despise me, forgive me, but leave me. I love you yet."

Then he remembered some friends he had made out there. . . . Their mothers had been sisters. The two cousins had the same dark flame in their oriental eyes. Their classic beauty was remarkable even in that great cosmopolitan centre where every race had taken root and soldiers mingled drawn from every quarter of the globe. Madame L——, the junior of the two, very spare, very tall, very haughty . . . like an Athenian or Corinthian lady of the old Greek type. A coyness which covered the face with the hands, prettily displaying the forearms, modernised her. Musical as a Polish girl she was full of vivacity. Intellectually she was engrossed in problems of psychology presented in the world around her and in literature dealing with the like. Madame J——, very mature, with great dark eyes under her languid lashes, and with heavy earrings which contrived to give a Levantine note to her slightly maternal appear-

ance. Time had not dimmed the splendour of her tresses. The lines of her figure betrayed generations-long dalliance on the silken cushions of the divans where dreams are wrapt in the blue smoke of scented cigarettes. Her daughter was on the contrary the quintessence of both types; the dull colouring under the brown curls; the forehead just such as Phidias gave in his ivory statue to Pallas; the arcs of the eyebrows so impeccable that they seemed to have been traced with the pencil of a Japanese artist; the deep brown eyes veiled by a discreet lowering: eyebrows which cannot be seen otherwhere than in Smyrna; a deeply intelligent look already singularly sceptical, readily lit with malice, the mouth of a child but with lips almost too thin in their narrow scarlet oval, a long fragile neck, a figure *svelte* and supple, even a little willowy, expressive of a femininity that knew only too well what it was about; and that elegance in the lines of the limbs and the feet which Asiatic Greeks alone of all the peoples of the Levant possessed. She was nevertheless very Frenchified, in her ready laughter, in her rapid intuitions. . . . She was sixteen years of age.

Characteristically thoughts of women led to thoughts religious. He found himself re-experiencing his impressions of the "Epitaphios," the symbolic burial of Christ as it was celebrated by

the Greek Church on Good Friday. "Someone great and famous, you would have said, was carried to burial in Salonika on Friday last. The dust, soft and warm about your feet, the sky dark and very high above you, you went, pushed by some major emotion, towards Saint Sofia. And there were whispers and words from the obscure houses about you which you divined to be almost emptied; on the balconies the feet of a few women only moved; the words of a few women flickered out and died in the hush of the deserted earthen street; and faces of women appeared to you like white shadows against the grills that closed them in. The words, the shadows, the hollow clacking of their shoes above, all pointed to some festal expectation for which they waited. And you passed on. In front of you there grew up out of the encompassing dark a haze of gold, a warm stream of light: it invaded the air and made of the night a thing shining and decorated. It was diffused, you saw soon, and scattered up by point after point of processional flame, each point yellow as honey and illuminated like sunlit amber. They twined and defiled before you, confounding your perspective, across the narrow street end; and, as you approached them, you heard populous movement and the wail of metal. At once you knew that men were mourning with

some tragic mourning. The ululation of the brass, the stamping of the muttering muffled drums, the crying of the people drew around you as it were and pressed upon you their own grief. Certainly someone great and famous, you felt, was being borne to burial at this unfamiliar hour with this pomp and keening. You hardly wondered any longer who it was: you had become so akin to those mourners that, whoever it might be, you would follow them to his grave. With them you would salute the unreturning Dead.... At last the hurrying numbers swept you aside and on, their tapers smoked hot against your face, their shoulders and their bodies pushed and pressed you. It was a tide that set round one thing and that thing came near.... High above it white arches of flowers looped, pale as artificial things are pale, without weight or fragrance. The brass wailed. Thin cracked voices of intoning complaining priests pierced the murmuring air. The crowd stopped and shuffled and moved on; and through that flaming river of men it came, the sad and sacred thing. Gold-crowned, gold-coped, with jewels in his crown and tiny coloured pictures shining from it, with the golden serpent-headed sceptre swinging to and fro in his hand as he paced, the high priest led it. Swarthy and grave, their hair loosened like women's, the down of their

uncut beards about their oval faces, with high black biretta and the long sweep of black robes, walked its sacerdotal escort. The white-flowered arches still stooped and looped above it as they came; small boys, imposing above their size in crimson hieratic garments that trailed to their feet, passed with it, peering and childish and indifferent, black crosses upon their round tall hats of straw. And as it was carried past them, the sacred imaged pall that was the Bier, men and women bent and kissed its edges. . . . Who was it that they carried thus to a brief and partly happy burial? Someone great and famous, someone honourable and renowned, someone, too, not utterly mortal! You would have known whose Bier it was a few hours earlier. The lamenting dirges had chanted His praises and our sorrows and His great sorrows also. Level and measured and wailing the cries had mounted up under the blue and golden arches of St Sofia.

"'Thou who didst set the measures of the earth, thou inhabitest to-day in a narrow tomb.

"'For thee the holy Mother tearful dirges wept and wailed, most motherly; how shall I mourn thee, O my son?

"'With a sword I am pierced most terribly and my bowels are torn asunder, looking upon Thy death unjust and murderous.

"'O Light of my eyes, my most sweet, sweet Son, how art Thou hidden now in the tomb?'

"And then as the keening passed in alternation to and fro, the high priest, stiff with gold, came down from his throne and bowed before the holy Bier and took in his hand a silver phial.

"'Coming very early in the morning, the women bearing myrrh sprinkled the tomb. . . . Coming very early in the morning the women bearing myrrh sprinkled the tomb. . . .'

"Three times he cried it, passing round the Bier. And he, too, these many ages after, made that Bier fragrant with sprinkling. So it was that in Salonika they carried to burial on Friday last Someone very great, it seems, and very famous. . . ."

On Friday last! It would never be further away again for him. He thought of his wife's only brother, her "big brother," gay and gallant in his green-black kilt with his soft dark hair curling out below his cocked glengarry and his blue eyes shining down over his red cheeks, who had been best-man at his wedding a few short months ago, and yet, a little later, within a few days of his landing in France, within a few weeks of his nineteenth birthday, had been blown to fragments, scattered on the shining indifferent air . . . and a great wave of darkness

soared out of his heart and toppled at a dizzy height and broke and roared down again. . . .

"He died too late for hope, too soon for faith.
So we, who have seen the end and had no scathe
Shall die. But they who fell with hearts aglow,
Whose hopes went with them to their burial,
Are happier. They are dead and do not know
What fools rejoice, what thieves hold carnival."

This unendurable conclusion was forced in upon him in a thousand shapes:—

"The faith by which we stand,
The laws we made and guard,
Our honour, lives, and land
Are given as reward
To murder done by night,
To treason taught by day,
To folly, sloth and spite
And we are cast away."

It was one of those ideas which when he tried to put it away developed that remarkable power of internal resistance by which a dog makes himself practically immovable by anything short of a kick. . . . This habit of pursuing general matters in a peculiar manner between jest and earnest was becoming confirmed. . . . He was like an ant-heap stirred: thoughts and memories ran about in all directions at the same moment. He relit his pipe, the flame of the match making scarlet the hollow of his hand. "Lord have mercy on the young, for grief is very hard until a cry becomes a prayer." "Let that day be dark-

ness. As for that night let darkness seize upon it: let it not be passed into the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months . . . let the stain of the twilight thereof be dark . . . because it shut not the doors of my mother's womb: nor hid sorrow from my eyes." It was too dark, now, to see the difference in tone between the earth and the sky: between outside and inside—save where broken lights of the city gleamed like the flashing of a shield and where in the irregular illumination of La Calade causeways flagged with irregular slabs of stone ran beside the low-browed houses and disappeared round acute and unexpected corners, and he caught glimpses of doors open within doors, of strange nooks and little courtyards, deep eaves darkening sinister windows. . . . Did he sit alone here in this upper room of a deserted world with "his unlit lamp and ungirt loin? . . ." "I stick fast in the mire where no ground is. . . ." Then, below, at the foot of the drive, human shapes, appearing mysteriously as if springing from the dark ground, skimmed the edge of the uncertain light thrown down by the lamps. The sight restored him to actuality—to the facts of the hospital. . . .

"Let us go to the most feverish patients!
They have strange exhalations.
In the middle of them I cross a battlefield with my mother.

Let us also go to the weakest.
They have strange perspirations.

They were pruning trees round the prison,
They were bringing medicines one afternoon in June,
And meals of patients were being spread at all the horizons. . . ."

Then—

"There are stags in a town that is besieged
And a menagerie among the lilies;
There is tropical vegetation in a coal-pit!
A flock of sheep is crossing an iron bridge!
And the lambs of the meadow are coming madly into the room.

There is a conflagration in the sun
And I cross a forest of wounded men. . . ."

He pulled himself together again. . . . His memory was like the shooting of frost crystals on a window-pane: never was there a crystal which was not attached by traceable lines to the main body, yet no one could prophesy whether each fine filament might strike out on its undivided adventure. What he sought would come slowly and in its own way. When the great music came it would not be such and such a bit of tone-colour, nor this or that sonority, but the soaring or tender curve of the themes, their logical yet ever new unfolding, the embodiment in the whole composition of richest variety with completest unity. . . .

He did not fancy that he was subject to fits

of delirium but by a sudden and alarming aberration he became aware of a troupe of trained dogs dancing on their hind legs. . . .

"Here is a jewelled token Homer brings
And there a ruby phrase of Wilde glows red:
In the far corner ghosts of seabirds' wings
Which Conrad garnered as a slim craft sped:
A bright keen diamond word which Johnson said;
Sweet perfumed tapestries from old Montaigne.
There glimmers Dumas' heavy signet ring,
The thought that flamed through Henley's hours of dread.

There is a store of little scraps of things
Hid in the dim cobwebbed nooks within my head:
A dusty pile of half-rememberings,
The doubloons and the silks of books I've read."

Veritably a spring-cleaning! In all this embarrassment of recollection, sensation and desire he resembled the man having all Eden and sighing for a pippin! . . . . He thought of Barrie getting that grip on the heart which is the prerogative of genius with an apparently hopeless apparatus of charwomen and winkles. . . . And he thought of him whose weary invariable comment had been: "It is all just bloody nonsense." (A devastating recollection which reminded him obliquely of the Johnsonian sentence which Andrew Lang claimed to have evolved from his inner consciousness by making his mind a blank and letting his pen write what it would: "Observing the down-grade tendency of the

sympneumatic currents, the Primate remarked that he could no longer regard Kafoozleum as an aid to hortatory eloquence.")

IV

He sat with the blood swinging in the hollows of his feet, steeping his thoughts in profounder views of the subject, conscious that, though the room was as black as a cave in Himmon, even if the light were switched on, he would still sit in a state of mental gutta serena, totally deprived of light, yet with no obscuration visible from without to any incomer. . . . As it was, however, the obscurity of the air and the obscurity in his mind closed together in a black fraternisation. . . . How to unroll the panorama of shifting tastes and backgrounds, varying theories and shattered waves of enthusiasms! . . . They were not fictional jumping jacks of absurd and utterly false heroism and cheerfulness. Let any reader feel with them the deadening weight of the pack, the grind of the shoulder-straps, the exasperation of the obstacles in a trench—all those seemingly trivial miseries which had piled up into an unpayable debt of hatred against war-makers. A sensitive man who had suffered was a man, whether he had endured the monotonous epic suffering of an infantry private or the continual spectacle of pain in a Casualty

Clearing Station, who returned not altogether sane. He had endured so much either in his own or the rent flesh of others that he brought back to civilisation an ardour of revolt, a sharp bitterness, made up partly of hatred and partly of pity. He saw with eyes different from other men's—clearer or more blurred, anyhow not the same. His state of mind was grievous. He suffered not only for himself but for others. Old ideas, old standards were inevitably judged with an acrid bitterness which sought to destroy and to cast into oblivion the oldest and most respected of human institutions—anything, if war might be made impossible. He came back with an *idée fixé*—never again must men be made to suffer as in these years of war.... Book after book was coming out now on this theme, each in its own way, according to the temperament of the author, formulating an indictment of modern society. . . . It was curious that the very people who were most anxious to stifle this harsh real war-literature were those who were most ecstatic early in the war at the thought of the masterpieces which would be produced by contact with reality . . . but "by instruction a man can learn to handle the normal and expected, but only inspiration will enable him to handle the abnormal and unexpected, and especially the most unexpected and abnormal

of all things—his fellow-man—aye, and even more so, himself!" "Bold is the donkey driver, O Khedive, and bold is the Khedive who dares to say what he will believe and what disbelieve, not knowing in any wise the mind of Allah, not knowing in any wise his own heart and what it shall some day suffer!" . . . . And after all what is the noise of one hard Buddhist student, desirous of admission to a monastery, struggling with the elementary problem? . . . . A cloak of darkness covered everything netherward while aloft the stormy sky looked down with a strange and disfigured face.

"The world is charged with the grandeur of God,
It will flame out like shining from shook foil."

. . . . . .

"Thou mastering me,
God, Giver of breath and bread;
World's strand, sway of the sea,
Lord of living and dead
Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened me flesh,
And after it almost unmade what with dread
Thy doing: And dost Thou touch me afresh?
Over again I feel Thy fingers and find Thee.
I did say yes
Oh, at lightning and lashed rod
Thou heardest me truer than tongues confess
Their terror, O Christ, O God!
Thou knowest the walls, altar, and hour and night,
The sorrows of a heart that the sweep and the hurl of Thee trod
Hard down with a horror of height!"

. . . . . .

The water flows to the sea and the little stones find their places.

"Christ plays in ten thousand places
Lovely in limbs and lovely in eyes not His."

. . . Time peered at him through his domino of days. With a sense of telescopically extending his mood he visualised the hearts of men during the crises of history. Times of great human calamity had always thrown men back on first principles: challenging both the optimisms and the pessimisms developed during periods of comfort and security, compelling men to reconsider their working creed of life in the light of terror and tears.

"The destruction of the Roman peace by the barbarian produced the 'Re civitate Dei' in which Augustine definitely abandoned the one 'City' built by men for serenity and enjoyment, to lodge his hope and all the hope of humanity in that 'City of God,' which was building like the Republic of Plato, somewhere 'beyond the fixed stars.' The earthquake of Lisbon produced many attempts to reconcile the popular buoyant Deism with an event so purposeless and brutal; and one immortal work of genius which rendered that buoyant belief incomprehensible for evermore. He thought of the effects of the Age of Anguish on the great writers who saw 'reality' suddenly substituted for realism

—Renan 'renouncing both Judea and Israel,' and thenceforth 'doing nothing, thinking nothing,' only clinging to hope; Taine in the face of 'dying men, flowing blood, burning cities,' with heart dead 'feeling as if living in a madhouse,' 'in a continuous state of dumb anguish and despair,' with all his scientific and positive system of human progress turned into dust and ashes; Flaubert dislodged by these nightmare visions from his boasted security in detached and dispassionate art, 'haunted by the one idea of the powerlessness of literature,' and convinced that it was impossible to rise again after such a blow. . . .

"Once more 'dying men, flowing blood, burning cities' had challenged both the affirmations of progress and social amelioration in the region of practical affairs: and the ultimate assertion beyond them of any intelligent or moral order of the universe. To some indeed the very call to action from thought which had lost itself in blind alleys and wandering mazes came as a relief and an inspiration. These had found in the call to arms a tonic and inspiration not given in the stagnant civilisation of a world grown 'too old.' They entered the combat with rejoicing, and had gone down into the darkness singing."

"Lost adventurers, watching ever
Over the toss of the tricksy foam
Many a joyous port and city
Never the harbour lights of home."

But in him the spirit of exultation had been rapidly overwhelmed by the spirit of questioning and disturbance. He had seen his dreams of human betterment vanish like the spider's web, his ideals of improvement for the hard lot of the masses of mankind torn to pieces or indefinitely postponed to some remote future beyond the space of his allotted days. He had been forced to wonder insupportably if any purpose could be discerned beyond the blind forces of human madness, hate and passion, making and unmaking without pity and without end. (All this with a sensation of twisting his head this way and that, desperately striving to get huge sections of life into focus!)

He descried on many sides an exhilaration in the spirit of the world's youth as they looked out on the universe now, on the edge of peace: and it afflicted him like a recurring decimal—with a sense of inexorable emptiness. But there it was. The very troubles of the time, the strained mental toil to make a league of nations, the insistent claim of workers to know all about the finance of commerce, to share more and more the profits, the perils and the management of industry, the hungry yearning for a better life, a roomier house, a "place in the sun," a chance to develop and display: all these (with a sickening sense of ancient illusion as if the confidence

trick had been successfully worked on him), seemed to be bracing young men again: giving colour, interest and adventure to living. A new world was being born and in its time-honoured fashion youth knew that it and it alone could tackle the obstetrical propositions. Great things would happen in England but he would have no part in them. A quotation from Wordsworth's letter to Matthew seemed to adapt itself to the expression of the purposes of his spirit: "I know that the multitude walk in darkness. I would put into each man's hand a lantern to guide him and not have him to set out on his journey depending for illumination on abortive flashes of lightning or the coruscations of transitory meteors."

And as he sat framed highly in the besetting storm he seemed to win some of the light of the lightning and much of the emptiness of the thunder, exclaiming with Valére Gille,

> "We have thought until
> The world is but the shadow of our dreams . . .
> The mind has ravaged space and we are ill
> With what we know: yet knowledge only seems
> Upon life's verge a net of cheating gleams."

"O Euphranor! he who looks into the bottom of things and resolves them into their first principles is not easily amused with words."

> "Whichever way I turn I find
> The path is old unto me still."

"The locust years! How these three words ran

like lizards in and out of the thoughts and memories that flocked to battle with the vicious phrase. His judgment found it hopeless to repudiate it utterly, but he hurled retorts at it, beautiful things remembered, wonderful things still desired. . . . Every day is a king in disguise. . . . But the years are locusts. . . . The locusts cannot touch the soul. . . . No, but they can undermine the spirit. . . . The spirit feeds upon life and grows the stronger by fearless contact with it. . . . The truth is the other way. Life itself is the great vampire and feeds upon all things . . . a bitter endless duologue between pessimism and optimism. . . . Life had assuredly played the vampire to every instinct in his breast . . . how his cynicism, distorting him beneath his mask of recklessness, his secret impatience with superficial things, his hidden intolerance of others, increasing to an asperity that he could only counter by the most anomalous fierce futilities of *camaraderie* had grown! . . . and yet how quickly he revived from each consuming crisis, these gala-banquets of the Great Vampire, life. . . .

"Locust years beyond denial: but though the locust might devastate, it devastates merely the surface and that only for a season. Green hopes are eaten—but Earth, the treasure-house of green things, cannot be eaten more than the sun:

the earth remains even as the heart remains, an ever-springing garden. Again and again he fought the stinging phrase with weapons of reminiscence. The years have been compact with other things than blood and tears. One might be passing rich in the possession of trivialities. These locust years had been full of life: the episodes in these years of trial were based upon such as upon little gritty worthless pebbles. Yet even these trivialities had made a rough basis for hard-earned repose, and one sufficient perhaps for a continuity of effort. All sorts of scraps of comedy cemented together these inconsequent finite trifles, comedy of juxtaposition, of the incidents of miscellaneous campaigning, of the incidents of personal experiencing. . . . All manner of grace hovered somewhere at hand, often too far out of reach for intimate delight but never too far for fleeting consolations. War pitiless, hideous, Godless, changed its face. Its crabbed pages became slowly legible. Philistine it remained, all-consuming like life it still proved yet as all-enduring and all-compensating as life. Everything was lost in it but everything was to be found in it.

"The reading of the great book of Armageddon became for a little while, at least to one of the soldiers, a thing which made good the waste of the locust years. The wine of things, the zest

for existence, shone behind those odd scraps of thought, these sudden glimpses into the motives of humanity in the mass. Justice and order, intrigue and egotism fought a great fight continually, and their grotesque instructive battle news travelled through any channel. Even in this wide Philistia were citadels—small enough but yet citadels—of art and faith which the pushing impulses of materialism could not disturb. Colour and form were there. . . . The music of various man remained ever divine and more than a solace, a great fount of exhilaration, a motive power, beautiful, inexhaustible, a thing that existed apart from the pink and white and red and gold concert rooms of the chancellories of empires and kingdoms, from schools of technique and commentary and criticism. . . . He visualised how, even now, the Goddess of Victory was strutting about the boulevards of Paris in a Megan toque.

"The story of the odd labour of these four wild years raced by him like a panorama. Such a gallimaufry as it was of all that was frivolous, absurd, luminous, suggestive, depressing, exasperating and farcical! Such a mosaic of hot haste and fatigue, overheated brains and mobs, over-produced nothingnesses, shams and jumbles! And through it all peered the faces of men and women, each one eager for acclamation and

for gain. Moreover, to each of these things hung others, the odd fruitage and gleanings of this odd life, insane confidences, strange privileges, glimpses into bottomless horror, terror, emptiness, visions of sacrifice and heroism and endless glory and goodness. 'With a royal sense of this world and how it passes away, with a catch at the heart of what is to come! And still the sense is royal: it is the majesty of art. We feel that we are greater than we know. So on the surge of our emotion as on the surge of Prospero's island is blown a spray, a mist. Actually it dwells in our eyes, bedimming them: and as involuntarily we would brush it away there rides in it a rainbow: and its colours are wisdom and charity, with forgiveness, tender truth for all men and women growing older, and perennial trust in young love.'"

"Earth, sea and sky are not as once they were
To us: there is no aspect of all things,
No pulse of heart or brain, no whisperings
Of truth's grave music to the inward ear
Unaltered or unglorified: the mere
Being of life, intense as song-swept strings
Is like a breathless sense of soaring wings
Loosed in the spirit's boundless atmosphere! . . .
We are not as we were! Our feet have ranged
The summits of imperishable hours:
Life is a lordlier hope: and we, estranged
In secret and at heart from all control
Walk in the wide new futures of the soul
Charged as with incommensurable powers!"

V

"A sky so wide that it could hold all sorts of weather at once."

He passed out again into the crowded world of his experiences, full of movement as a river, his eyes occupying every function of sense, touching his memories, traversing them from head to foot, inquiring darkly and passionately concerning their bodies, looking through them, ravishing them, draining them, and leaving no physical or mental part untouched . . . tongues of air ferreting out the secrets of life!

"From far, from eve and morning
And yon twelve-winded sky
The stuff of life to knit me,
Blew hither: here am I."

In a bird's-eye view, as Milton's Satan first saw Paradise, he caught glimpses, like a jigging of flames, of the keeper of a village shop explaining that his kippers are "mountainy herrin's and great pets. . . . I catch them in the garden at the back of the house. . . . Last winter when the snow was on the ground they'd come into the kitchen and sit for hours on their tails round the fire warming themselves and them as tame as cats," or how, returning from a wake, "just as I was passin' this very place out steps a tall, respectably-dressed ghost about forty-six years of age"; of a man of middle age, with a pointed

beard, a jolly-looking man, a forceful face and a lovable one, roguish a bit, with that old Gallic spirit that makes fun in public of the things that Englishmen laugh over in private, yet benevolent—the face of a man who begins life as a delightful companion and ends it as a delightful grandfather; of peaceful countries, tinged with the early Spring, trees and fields, belfries and far-off hamlets, all under a sky sad-coloured and beautiful as that sky which dwells for ever over the "Avenue near Middleharnis"; of Sorley's "we were fighting not a bully but a bigot" . . . of Chapin hating the gregariousness and publicity of Army life with a deadly hatred interspersed by daily longing for his home, his wife and his little child . . . of Tom Kettle dropping pearls. . . . "They have nailed their leader to the mast." "Mr Healy is a brilliant calamity" . . . of the Grenfell brothers, of Anthony Wilding, of Donald Hankey, of Frederick Keeling . . . of all the snapped stalks of incomparable youth; of one walking resolutely onwards into "the great red light": of the anxious face of a poor little sucking pig; of the troubled surface of a river wherein the stars, reflected and distorted, shone like broken spear-heads; of a long straight improbable village, with its bridge, its ancient stone cross, its irregular pink and white houses,

as improbable as a street in *opéra bouffe*, with a thin cloud of dust rising, a thin screen of white dust, which, in the sun, looked like a fume of silver; of planes of light and darkness outspread; of a great-grandmother surviving on the verge of her hundredth year to mumble chestnuts over the fire of a Kentish farm, and the great-granddaughter of a Spanish dancer who married in the early thirties of the previous century a rather ordinary British soldier, inheriting her wild, passionate nature inextricably intermingled with British reserve, just as the dancing mouse will sometimes reappear amid the brood of a common domestic rodent; of a void of blind-eyed water; of the shooting of a pitiful rotund little mayor strutting gamely to the end; of a woman dying very quietly at last on the floor of a cart, and her husband's unspoken annoyance with her just before her death because she did not as usual respond to his sympathy; of the chaotic formula, pyrrhic = trochee = pæon = choriamb, *i.e.*, $2 = 3 = 4 = 5 = 6$, the effect of which until scientifically measured remained the sphere of possible personal illusion; of the engaging spectacle of a home-loving working man whose only ambition was to rise by steady work, to be elected to the Glee Club and the Social Club, perchance even to the Town Council, and probably with dreams

at dizzy moments of becoming mayor of his native town and dying at last amidst universal regrets for our "highly-respected fellow-townsman"; of graceful and proportionate figures-of-eight heads going off into random facial angles; of the rays of male vision which seem, as Hardy says, to have a tickling effect upon virgins' faces; of cats going into various arched shapes and fiendish convolutions; of lights flapping as if reflected from phosphorescent wings crossing the air; of a rising fire brightening a room with the brazen glare of shining majolica; of the most hen-like waiter in France; of a distinguished novelist producing a new volume written like many of its predecessors round the boot and shoe industry in Northamptonshire; of how the other day when he had been in the city a particular little group of two became individualised out of the side-walk crowd like a particular wavelet which gleams from the lap-lapping of a river with an instantaneous personality of its own; little houses on the grey hillsides of Eskdalemuir; the cluck of hens about the doors on a hot summer's morn; the crying of plovers in the windy Aprils; the smell of peat smoke; of how the "Charge of the Light Brigade" had been written round a phrase in a newspaper account and of how the "Solitary Reaper" owed its two most famous lines to a

phrase from a guide-book; of how a lugworm sang with its grey and muddy mouth; . . . war memories crowding in upon his mind in their images of misery and horror and brutality, "word upon awful word" with a truth that denied and a courage that terrified, and then, when his endurance was at breaking-point, lo! how he came upon lovely things, a land of wine and music, the touch of fur, the kiss of sea-borne winds, the peace of sleep, the scent of roses in the dawn . . . by these paths returning to the knowledge of loyalty and faithfulness which kept his vision whole.

"To the Heavenly Power I cry,
Foiled by these dreams of immortality,
'Let be as Thou wilt,
And the foundations in Thy dark mind built;
Even infinity
Be but imagination's dream of Thee;
And let thought still, still
Vainly its waves on night's cliff break and spill.
'But Heavenly Power,' I'd cry
Knowing how, near or far, He still is nigh,
'When this burning flesh
Is burnt away to a little driven ash
What thing soever shall rise
From that cold ash unseen to unseen skies,
Grant that so much of me
Shall rise as may remember Thy World and Thee.'"

So on and on: he recalled a girl with the unnecessarily pungent name of Sapphira; a man whose nose was so thin that it would go through

a cambric needle, shoulders so hard and sharp that they would cut tobacco, his head dark and bushy like the top of a hill and with fingers which could be likened to nothing; another who was clean gold, heaven about the sun, a silver vessel having wine in it; a wide general sensation that seemed like

"A tossing and lifting of bodies lost and drowned
In the huge indifferent swell, in the waters' wandering sound,"

then, instantly a verse—

"Often have I seen in fields the little birds
Go in between a bullock's legs to eat,
And what gives me most joy is when I see,
Snow on my doorstep printed by their feet";

the fact that every Cathedral choir in England contains at least one former member of the choir of Leeds Parish Church—unpromising machinery getting home to his heart as swiftly and unerringly as Mozart, so that he was brought trembling before the eternal verities by means of a gay libertine, a comic lackey, or a stone statue tramping in to supper; or by four charwomen, a fussy curate and a massive kiltie with hairy legs taking tea and winkles and talking in a nice derangement of epitaphs culled from the Sunday Papers, crude and vulgar, but belonging to the world of poetry and not to the world of fact.

Then isolated items from his omnivorous recent reading came upon him like a cloud of insects . . . the sickness of acquisitive society—the present need of an aristocracy (making his brain a hall of mirrors in which he caught countless reflections of every theme in as many shapes and sizes)—searching expositions of theories of industry and life, one holding that industry is and must be conducted for private gain, another that it must be subordinated to social purpose, another stressing the need for a recognition of race values and even of family values in human progress, holding that the equality which exists between men by virtue of their possessing each an immortal soul involved an even distribution of justice and protection of law without distinction of persons but did not involve the admission of any claim to equality of action or the denial of varied status, since race values, both of the gens and of blood, invariably entered into and established differences in character, in intelligence and in capacity which could not be permanently changed, save with the slowness of metamorphosic rock, by education, environment and heredity (taking up thus, as he felt too, one after another great subjects occupying the minds of thinking people, as they are ludicrously called, and thinking intelligently round them, a practice all too

common, and, for capable minds, fatally easy)—the reflections of an accomplished thinker who believed that man is immortal in that the brain communicates to the ether vibrations which influence other brains through an indefinite period of time—a consideration of Plato, Socrates, Bacon, Spinoza and Nietzsche with the view of showing that the social problem has been the basic concern of the greater philosophers, that the social problem must be approached through philosophy, and that philosophy must be revitalised by being approached through the social problem—a discussion of the extensibility of co-intuition — perambulations occasionally Bacchic and a company lurid but criticisms never blatant or vulgar, resting always on refined appreciations, and a trip to that fabulous inn "The Chequers" at never mind where, a fairy hostelry (not without a hundred miles of London), where the landlord played Mozart's Sonatas and the police sergeant in the bar read Boswell and preferred Gluck to Debussy—off betimes on a spring morning to Amersham or to Boxhill—dreaming of the time when Limehouse would once more be free and easy, Soho flowing with Chianti and real macaroni, and khaki faded from the Strand (seeking vainly that English, to be found in *Gulliver's Travels* or in Bunyan, which is a kind of rare

and dynamic language, as straight as a ray of light, the result of passionate morality that happened to be gifted with the complete control of full expression.) . . .

In a huge Wellsian access, he thought how the greatest of all international crimes had been committed in a blind unanimity of enthusiasm with scarcely a voice to protest against it . . . of movements, causes, obsessions, defects and animosities; the degradation of the Empire into a dirty little scheme for taxing the foreigner; the degradation of Patriotism into sloppy adulation for a little German family and their vast crowd of German relatives and dependants; the invincible ignorance of governing Bourbons who learn nothing and forget nothing; the fatuous refusal of the Universities to give the future governing classes the faintest idea of what they would have to govern; the enormous self-satisfaction of the Public Schools at their wholesale manufacture of young men "with the outlook of clean, serious bricklayers' labourers, densely ignorant and intensely opinionated"; the evil influence of the hordes of rich idle women kept at vast cost in great expensive houses, using the labour of innumerable people, terrorising the poor, consuming (like sacrifices) huge pyramids of sheep, cattle, birds, and bottles of wine and in return devastating

the land with animosities and bitter class hatreds; humanity, under the surface of the portraits which pursue and persecute, through the medium of the pictorial papers, incessantly —the vivid scum of politicians, intellectuals, artisticalsand detrimentals—heart-brokenwith millionfoldbereavement; of miners and factory handsin the North of England who didnotcare about increasing their wages or living in bigger houses or wearing finer clothes, but discussed Greek history with men like Zimmern, Greek poetry with men like Gilbert Murray, Greek philosophy with men like Hadow: and so of a great diversity of thinkers, from the materialist out for revolution to the old "Stunt-Maker" flinging his hat in the air with three cheers for Nature, and the student sitting up the night through at his books and going straight from them to the shop. . . .

> "So he stood and eyed me hard,
> An earnest and a grave regard,
> 'What, lad, dropping with your lot?
> I, too, would be where I am not,
> I, too, survey the endless line
> Of men whose thoughts are not as mine.'"

Andstillhe thought of ordinary sorts of working men at home developing into goodsoldiers and snipers of peculiar genius, with privateand tragic and utterly ridiculous reasons behind their passion for killing Germans, moving to berserker and heroic ends; of pale people crav-

ing trash to divert their minds from the horror of great darkness, rent by thunder of guns and the lightning's devouring flame, which, for an eternity, had brooded over them and robbed them of all joy in life; of intolerable writers seizing the chances and the casualties of the battle-field as a means of disentangling the impossible knots tied in the destinies of their under-created puppets. . . .

Most extensively he recalled a woman writer whose professed aim was to record the spiritual tendencies of the hour and to stimulate thought about them. She had perhaps what would be quite generally deemed to be a great deal of ability, but sometimes she had a glib fluency which gave an impression of superficiality and rushed her through dubious statements on to preposterous epic paths. "Intellectual chaos and moral despair is the spiritual portion of the best men and women of to-day." "The doctrine of verbal inspiration with its inevitable implications is revived for the moment in practice if not in theory. The God of Battles whom we salute to-day is Jehovah, the Tribal God. . . ." The second part of her book discussed the modern tendency to discredit reason in comparison with instinct (the frequent quotation of *élan vitale* supplying the shibboleth), the return to the primitive in art and in the science of

humanity; the new developments of psychology; the growing insistence on personality as the moving force of history, the "herd instinct" only to be combated by personality and dangerously fostered she thought both by the Church and the school. "For the moment in my judgment passion unrestrained and instinct all unmoralised do seem in unexpected measure to rule our life. Reason and religion are submerged beneath the flood. . . ."

There was so much to be read that there was hardly time to think. How could he digest the marvellous, the epoch-making truths which every day put before him! And the still more marvellous lies! The war-time lies, the press bureau lies, the eye-witness lies, the lies of accusation and the lies of defence; thousands of liars, nations of liars, conscience-impelled liars, and liars for the love of the art! The truth as an abstraction had disappeared. They might in the dim future again approximate it. They would never reach it. "The Germans mutilate the Belgians," "the Belgian civilians ambush the Germans," "the English use Dum-Dum bullets," "the Germans mount machine-guns in Red Cross ambulances," "Germany caused the war," "England craftily planned Germany's destruction," "Russia attacked Austria," "Austria planned the destruction of Serbia," "France

planned to attack Germany through Belgium." There was no end. There never would be any end.

He had feverishly devoured every book, magazine, pamphlet, newspaper, Government paper and statistical report dealing with the war on which he could lay a hand. He had read bushels of briefs, barrels of explanation, pounds of technical data. He had dreamt of the German fighting machine, of the French seventy-five mm. guns, of the Belgian dog-drawn cannon, of the Hungarian cavalry, of the sotnias of Cossacks, of forts, trenches, aeroplanes, submarines, tanks, lyddite and melinite shells, of forty-two centimetre howitzers, of batteries and charges until his brain refused to absorb any more, and then he had joined the Army and been in the thick of it ever since.

He had read the White Papers of England and Germany, the Grey Papers of Belgium, and the Orange Papers of Russia. He had waded through Mr Bernard Shaw's harangues, Mr Arnold Bennett's reply and Shaw's rebuttal. He had listened to Mr Hilaire Belloc world without end. He had seen it through with Mr Britling. Mr Rider Haggard's articles had excited his ghastly amusement, and Mr Harold Begbie's his nerve-shattering detestation. Dr Dernberg and Count von Bernstoff had not

been lost on him. And he had read and reread *Germany and the Next War*, and those splendid books, Professor Cramb's *Germany and England*, and *The New Map of Europe* by Professor Gibbons. Dr Armgaard Karl Graves had not been overlooked, nor had the countless letters to the press, which had added to the weirdness and mysteries of life. And he had heard Mr Lloyd George passionately aver at Bwfydle that this war, like the next war, is a war to end war. And now he had commenced to dream of writing extensively about it himself which was weirdest and most mysterious of all.

. . . . .

And now his mind was like a hayrick aflame where, when the wind blows the fire inwards, the portion in flames completely disappears like melting sugar, and the outline is lost to the eye.

VI

"Here the truceless armies yet
Trample rolled in blood and sweat.
They kill and kill and never die
And I think that each is I."

Under a Homeric cloud of thought, feeling himself now in the penumbra of infinite tragedy, he re-travelled the battle-fields of the Western Front . . . stood again in the Belgian line looking across to the steeples of Dixmude, his ears

suffocated with the booming of the big guns, the rattle of the mitrailleuses and the ping of the rifles. There was no rest day or night. The roar of artillery was continuous on all sides. He was encircled by guns. They were everywhere.

How would he describe the battle-field of the Somme? A broad road leading through an open country, rising and falling in conformity with the configuration of the ground. A long stretch of that road covered with traffic of all kinds: huge guns being dragged along by heavy traction-engines; great motor wagons in an interminable line, carrying food, ammunition, clothing: men marching towards the front, either fresh from their training or returning from rest camps . . . making once more towards the hell of the trenches; others returning from the battle-ground covered with a caking of mud and yet fretted with an odd cheeriness despite the strain through which they had passed and the bitter cold that bit to the bone: long strings of horses. . . .

On either side of the road were camps for men, camps for horses, parks for reserve vehicles and artillery dumps. Energy and activity unceasing. The monotony of going through such traffic hour after hour, day after day, year after year. Overhead aeroplanes went to and fro in a very sky that was becoming crowded and peaceless.

A little farther on, entrenchments, barbed wire, shell-holes, hulls of houses. The traffic thinned, wagons were stopped here. Horses switched off the road there. Then that part of the road, and the lifted ground where over it goes where the first heavy fighting in the Somme Battle took place.

This was the very heart of the trench-crossed, shell-pitted, mine-caverned battle area. As far as the eye could see on each side of the road there was nothing but desolation. All had been cultivated ground, studded with villages, farm-houses, villas, and here and there a château. Pleasant woods had risen up in parts. . . . To-day a few stumps showed where the woods had been, a few heaps of bricks remained of the villages. Even the piles of bricks were few and far between: in most cases the last vestiges of habitations and of the materials whereof they had been composed had been utterly obliterated.

Away to the right and to the left lay the British and the German lines. . . . They were close together until the days of the first offensive. In broad daylight the guns flashed in different directions and the shells droned as they sped to their objectives. A whole district stretching for miles in every direction with zigzagging trenches, wire entanglements, shell-holes, dug-outs, little crosses marked with the names of

men who perished. . . . These cemeteries and crosses met one everywhere. . . . They lay quiet, these soldiers. The busy traffic on the road passed them by. The inquisitive visitor went from trench to trench, from dugout to dugout, read the inscriptions, gathered curios and passed on. They had gone for ever and would come again no more.

These villages that were dust and a brick or two might have been more nobly planned, their buildings larger and newer, their streets broader and better kept. . . . He could not forget the coming and going of generations who had lived their quiet, however varied, lives, had experienced their joys and their sorrows, their hopes and their fears, beneath the humble roofs that had been cast upon the indifferent air.

The same desolation had been spread from Riga to the Black Sea. In the Caucasus, in Mesopotamia, on the Austro-Italian frontier, in Macedonia, the same picture of incomputable woe!—an interminable series of swaying campaigns.

And he thought of the "one-thousandth performance of the comic war-play, 'Carryin' On,' which brings the humours of carnage so amusingly across the footlights," of the "interest in European affairs diverted to cocaine," of the "mass meeting of Bishops to agree upon what

Bishops ought to say about the teaching of Christ and the war when they are so ill-advised as to say anything," of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Grave Warning "against taking the New Testament too literally in war-time," of the pungent pictures showing the "Christianity Shortage: Scene in Yesterday's Queue at Westminster Abbey" and "Escape of an Awkward Fact from the Press Censor's Office," and of Lord Northcliffe directing the removal of Mr Lloyd George's statue from Printing House Square with two press-photographers in attendance. . . . Dryden had spoken somewhere of a connoisseur of news wearing "three nations in his face." . . . A memory kept "liddening" through his brain of Seinkiewic's titanic historical trilogy running serially for eight long years through the Warsaw *Slovo*—of its translation into English in about twenty volumes and of how, in spite of the comparative obscurity of its setting, it had achieved quite a reasonable success—in America. "Impatience, the mother of stupidity, praises brevity, and then men want to comprehend the Mind of God in which the universe is included. Oh, human stupidity! do you not perceive, though you have been with yourself all your life, that you are not yet aware of the thing you possess most of—that is, your folly?" . . . How he abhorred the man who

lacked the sense of filigree! (His mental playing was now very soft. He was dreaming over something similar to one of those bizarre fantasies of Schumann which reflect the setting of his sun in a red haze of madness.) . . . He could not see any internal centre from which sprang anything that he thought or did. . . . His attitude could only be described as one of curiosity. Material might be found in a dream forest of Africa, or a new red-brick house among stubble fields, in the hot-houses of Kew or cave-dwellings of Auvergne or in sheer enchantment or faery. Within these extremes lay the golden mean of interest he should take. How should he discipline his sympathies? How order the jungle of his sensibilities that his spirit might dwell there profitably? Herrick wrote of Julia's silks, Milton of the activities of Satan, Chardin in a kind of stagnant ecstasy painted a clear black-green bottle and an onion, Goya a bull-fight, and Degas a ballet-dancer adjusting her shoe as if in eternal life. . . . Perhaps it would be better if he dedicated himself to evolving a fantasia in the shape of a cabbage or a poem in the form of a dog.

"Reason has moons but moons not hers
Are mirrored in her sea:
Confounding her astronomers
But ah! delighting me!"

. . . . . .

Then strong and swift and instinct with perfect purification there flowed back upon him the full tide of a stirring lay sermon which a Socialist comrade had delivered once during the war when he had been home on leave.

Hazlitt had told how he walked twelve miles to hear Coleridge preach in a Unitarian pulpit, "a romance in those degenerate days." . . . As Coleridge gave out his text, "And He went up into the mountain to pray *Himself alone*," his voice "rose like a stream of rich distilled perfumes," and when he came to the last two words, which he pronounced loudly, deeply and distinctly, it had seemed to him, who was then young, "as if the sounds had echoed from the bottom of the human heart, and as if that prayer might have floated in solemn silence through the universe."

So this friend had begun with the words from the Song of Solomon, "Set a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm, *for Love is as strong as death*"—and a similar spell had been straightway cast upon the congregation. Save when two women with grief on their features broke down and left the church, nobody stirred.

"The essence of death," he said, "is that it separates. There is probably no one who has not resisted the separation. . . . Even when we believe in the all-watching care of a loving God

we cannot bring our minds quickly to believe that all is ordered for the best when Death uninvited enters the home, and like the Angel of the Passover, leaves weeping and lamentation where there has been love and laughter.

"The lives that have been laid down in Flanders or in Gallipoli, on sea or on land, have not merely been laid down once and for all. Without this faith how could the mind remain unhinged? The strength of death must be great if it can, having separated man from man, keep him away from God.

"In our own hospitals, at the bedsides of our friends, Love is at this moment refusing to believe in it, even though we know that the sufferer cannot live. In actual fact Love has its victories over death. Love is the incentive of everything that is good.

"It is what inspires men to search out the deep things of Nature, to uncover her secrets; it is what prompts our men of science to analyse the properties of matter; it is what leads our doctors to study the human frame; it is what leads our savants to study the history of men and things, to reveal to us the laws which regulate the great movements in thought; it is what leads our poets to seek the beauty of life and sing to us of its wonders,

"'Glorying to God on the height';

it is what impels our saints and men of religion to find the relation of the soul to God; it is what compels a man to search his own soul, for it is only when a man is really in love that he sees the defects in himself and his position, sees them with a preternatural and startling vividness—if he is a man.

"Love laughs at Death! It is the great merit of our faith that nothing can intervene between Christ and us that cannot be overcome."

And he saw in the dark lineaments of the man he was to become some such resemblance as Stephen Graham saw in a portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson to a painting of Christ in a Russian Monastery—a Christ, albeit a little cynical and with a cigarette in his mouth!

> "The babble wren and nightingale
> Sang in the Abyssinian vale
> That season of the year.
> Yet, true enough, I heard them plain,
> I heard them both again, again,
> As sweet and sharp and clear,
> As if the Abyssinian tree
> Had thrust a bough across the sea,
> Had thrust a bough across the sea
> With music for my ear."

Like a clear sky after a tempestuous night of wind and rain the thin rhythm stole into his numbed and blinded brain, admirably sustaining the leap and bound of his imagination, and

swinging gently under the strain like a supple branch that bears the weight of a bird.

So his moods came and went, shining as Excalibur, beautiful as the spear of St George. They were like grasses in the winds, one rubbing the heads heavily, one raking them piercingly, and another brushing them like a soft broom: and he heard the voice of his overself, deep within him, with the "unwinded clearness and unnatural sequence" that informed the controlled and muffled notes of Farmer Oak's flute

VI THE FOLLOWING DAY

THE FOLLOWING DAY

SCENE.—*A remote Shooting Lodge beset with antlers of the wild red deer.*

"MY house is crowned with horns
—Transpiercing horns of deer!
As were His brows with thorns.
Between two thieves He hung
Upon His Cross,
As here 'twixt earth and sky
Hang I.
A song a soldier sung
Jocundly in the dark
As now my heedless heart
—Oh, hark!
Defiant of its loss,
Jocundly in the dark,
My heart that crucified me here!

'I nailed Him high
'Twixt earth and sky
And Heaven shut
Its flaming eye
But
Be nights as Hell
I know full well
My way to you, oblivious slut,
Who all my roaring blood shall glut,
Shall glut,
Who all my roaring blood shall glut!

'And when they loose Him from the tree
At break of day

I shall not care and shall not see
—At break of day.
My snoring head between your breasts
Will snugly lie,
Will snugly lie,
My snoring head between your breasts
Will snugly lie.'

Every tine when morning came
Caught and held a flying flame,
But between her breasts he lay
Lost to day,
And between her spent breasts fell
Spent, to Hell!

"And I who have been crucified
Go light-foot in the morning-tide
—But hark!
The jocund notes like birds of prey
Go dark
Between me and the clarity of day!"

VII SARTORIA

"Oh I have thought how Una wore
The linen cloth below her chin,
And if the poet, Rudel, bore
A scrip with all his songs therein;
I know the shoes on Bice's feet
When Dante met her in the street,
And I could tell how Florence made
Lorenzo's marriage festival,
And how young Friar Lappi played
In cloth unfriarlike withal!
And in a thought I stretched my hand
To touch the dress of Heloïse . . .
Yet of this diverse company
Of people dead or fabulous
What one of them could come to me
Had he the power and speak me thus:
'Chosen and placed of all of these
I am that one you understand'?
Since maybe who beholds the dress
Searches for no deep loveliness.
And yet—and yet, there is no mind
That, being found, is wholly kind,
And better finger silk and lace
Than look too fully on one face."

"PLUSKOW was found hanging from a saddle-strap secured by a nail in his rooms. He had been strangled. Feet, knees, hands and elbows were secured with straps behind his back, and a remarkable feature of the case was that the dead man wore long women's corsets and white gloves to the elbow." A peculiar trick of emphasis focused my interest on this last fantastic detail with an

intensity which disturbed me. He added a comment dealing with representations made several years before by a distinguished and lean-brained journalist* which had resulted in an order to Potsdam officers that white parade breeches were not to be worn on Sundays. And a second later, apropos of something else (he was always like that; it was practically impossible to get *en route* with him; his mental processes were extraordinarily difficult to follow, and when followed landed you in such a glimmering atmosphere of netted irrelevancy as made you doubt, not exactly your sanity, but the sanity of sanity itself) he set the whole matter in a most intense and surprising light by explaining that in the Convent of the Jesuits at Lisbon there was a picture "representing Adam in Paradise dressed in blue breeches with silver buckles and Eve with a striped petticoat. And why not? Why not?"

That was the man's method. He overflowed with sudden appreciations. New founts of the most unlikely delight were constantly breaking in his ingenuous and unaccountable mind. A quietly-dressed, unobtrusive little fellow, with the softest and brightest eyes I ever saw in a masculine head, his life seemed to be a perpetual toast to "The Ladies—God bless them!"

* Maximilian Harden, 1899.

inimitably proposed, something between Conrad and George Moore, with a wealth of whimsicality, an unerring if unusual taste, a refreshing volubility, an enchanted and enchanting air. As he spoke I would think of Rupert Brooke's *Great Lover*—his conversation was just like that, a swift, beautiful catalogue of the most delightful and unexpected of interests. He seemed to stick a verbal flower on everything he saw. A scrap of information retailed by him in his quick, quiet voice, flavoured with infinite reminiscence, glittered like a precious stone in a quaint and surprising setting. How his company made of a crowd a thing composed, designed, vibrant, calling to me and making a call in my heart! Pale sunlight suddenly gleamed down upon tall chimneys and a sprawling metropolitan mass shrunk away into an obscure significance while life spun on a single pointed toe, a hat broke into song, or grey houses were neatly bound together with a bow of orange ribbon.

He could isolate the shy fire of a brooch or arrest a flashing petticoat with a startling instancy and jewel-like completeness where straight down a hill dipped a double row of street lamps displaying a whirligig of figures in the dark space between. A flash of imagination caught an unknown life, discriminating count-

less shades where the common eye sees but gloom or glare; pursuing countless distinct movements where the common eye sees only a whirling perplexity; with just time to speculate, to appreciate, to commemorate in the instantaneous gratitude of a perfect phrase—and his eyes moved on. He "lived in the flicker" and darkness was all about. Souls glided in the human river, small green souls, red souls, white souls, pursuing, overtaking, joining, crossing each other, then separating slowly or hastily. So he seemed to see life. His eager interest seemed to pass lightly and brightly along the heads, throwing up faces here and there (and always a face worth throwing up), swaying the bodies, running along like a ripple on water, like a breath of wind on a field. I see it now—the multitudinous surge, a pair of eyes here now and there now shining out suddenly like stars through loaded boughs and vanishing again, mutable and amazing faces glowing for an instant between darkness and darkness! When he spoke he always made me think of that passage in Conrad's *Youth*: "I watched the procession of headlights gliding high, and of green lights gliding low in the night, when suddenly a red gleam flashed at me, vanished, came into view again, and remained!" Remained! As if I could ever forget the way in which as if conduct-

ing some subtle ministration in the service of beauty he would murmur, "Soft tones of pink, rose, geranium, champagne, beige, lime, purple, helio, nigger, havana, ivory and black," or the manner in which he said "'The present price of gloves reminds me of the advice given to a debutante by an elderly lady who had been through the circle of Society functions and had grown grey and wise. 'My dear,' she said to her young friend before her first ball, 'you are too old now to scale garden walls and old enough to know never to waste white gloves on a younger son.'"

It might have been written of him that "he had the Old Dog's eyes in his head. They watched the door she (Beauty) passed through; they listened for her as dogs' eyes do. When she hung on her lover (Time) timidly and went forth, he followed without an idea of envy or anything save the secret raptures the sight of her gave him, which are the Old Dog's own. His sensations cannot be heroic but they have a fulness and a wagging delight as good in their way." He was a witty, feminine, indecorous lover of mobility, grace, beauty and genius, whose song of thanksgiving was always "a song of flourishes; one of those beflowered arias in which the notes flicker and leap like young flames." To be pointedly rational was a greater difficulty to him than a fine delirium. His far-

rago was wonderful and winning. He loved things "extreme and scattering bright." It was difficult to distinguish the true edifice of his mood for its pinnacles, cupolas, turrets, infloriations and flying buttresses.

I remember discussing with him once the subject of modern stage production. Actor-managers were for ever complaining that Shakespeare did not pay. "Let them take a leaf out of Mrs Kean's book," he cried, "and substitute a lounge suit and spats for the buskin and doublet and they will have bumper audiences and a queue at the booking office. After all, the play's the thing: the rest is only leather and prunella. How Orlando, a dashing young fellow with varnished hair dressed in a nicely cut sports coat and flannel bags would fetch the Matinée girl! And think of Rosalind in a pale blue charmeuse cut on the bias, flesh-coloured stockings and a tête-de-negre straw hat trimmed with muslin and poppies. Juliet in a nightdress of aeroplane linen would sit on the balcony knitting a jumper while she waited for her Romeo, who would come in evening dress with a shirt by Messrs Dick & Dinkey's. . . . Juliet in a nightdress of aeroplane linen!" How the repetition and the pause conveyed an almost uncontrollable excitement to me while he held me with ecstatic eyes!

"Nor," he continued after a little, "would Malvolio's lines suffer if that gentleman were brought up to date and dressed in a neat Irish tweed with spats and a monocle. Hamlet, of course, would wear morning dress and top hat, while Henry V. at Harfleur could hardly be better dressed than in khaki with red tabs. Othello gives the *lingerie* firms plenty of scope in the bedroom scene. Desdemona would be in silk pyjamas with a dainty little mob-cap, while Othello, to show his savage origin, would adhere to the obsolete and barbarous nightshirt. The bed—an artistic four-poster draped with futuristic cretonne—would be supplied by the Alpha Workshops, price lists at box-office. . . ."

All this going down Princes Street one sunny afternoon! As I saw the fashion in which his eye fastened on to a sale poster the fine frenzy of the caption, "Furs! Furs! Furs!" seemed to half suffocate my soul. By the time we had reached Shandwick Place he was busy elaborating another characteristic theme.

"In these days," he said, "fastenings had become what our grandmothers would have called precarious. The multitude of hooks and eyes which once maintained dresses was unknown, and even the pressed button had declined in popularity. Garments were hung on the shoulders and crossed at the waist or just

confined under a belt, and there was little lacing or hooking or buttoning anywhere. Even the corset was but the shadow of its former self. For evening it was no longer just the neck that was *décolleté*, or even the shoulders, but the entire back, and as low as possible in front. Anatomical studies abounded. 'Where is the back of the dress?' I asked foolishly in one shop. 'That, my dear sir, is provided by the lady,' was the reply. 'But surely it isn't quite—well. . . .' 'Perhaps not, but it is going to be very fashionable.' 'But with a dress that begins and ends —er—there, how can a woman wear anything underneath!' 'Very simple. She will leave it off. Corsets will not be worn with the new evening gowns. The new *lingerie* is specially designed not to interfere with the back view. . . .' I went out a great deal that winter. I have my memories. There was, for example, a frock of white silk jersey cloth made with a little bodice and tiny short sleeves. The skirt from a front view appeared to be composed of three wavy flounces of the material, whilst around the waist there was a loosely knotted belt. But from the back just a plain white foundation was to be seen, the flounces were absent, and, in fact, the jersey cloth altogether had ceased to appear, having stopped short at each side, bodice included—bodice included! The effect was odd and gave

a peculiar impossible look to the frock, unparalleled in my experience!"

He stopped short and looked blankly into my eyes, so conveying his sense of an altogether irrational effect in a most thrilling fashion.

"This season," he resumed, in a subdued fashion, as if he had just evaded a crisis, "caprice and novelties there are many but no drastic change of silhouette. No!" reflectively, "no drastic change of silhouette. I have in my mind's eye a toilet designed for a lady who is noted for her taste in dress. The frock is of Nattier blue taffetas—after seasons of noiseless silks you will agree that it will be enchanting to hear the soft rustle again!—simple in style, with a *lingerie* collar and cuffs, and a *gilet*, the only note of colour a girdle of orange silk in *filet* crochet-stitch and applique with corn-flowers and leaves. Over this will be worn a cape of blue taffetas with a fence collar and trimmings, bands on the front and the bottom of the cape of crocheted orange silk. The silk repeated, of course, in the georgette crêpe lining! . . . ."

We walked for a few yards in silence. Then he bought the latest edition from a running newsboy. The first item to catch his eye was a notice respecting a forthcoming furniture sale. "Listen!" he cried (I cannot hope to reproduce the colourful gusto of his voice), "the wonderful

world! . . . 'Old blue and white Spode supper service of a hundred pieces. Antique bow-front chest drawers; set of eight Chippendale chairs, two with elbows; Buhl show cabinet; three-light candelabra; trophy of armour.'" Trophy of armour! What brave and clangorous scenes his inimitable inflections invoked. . . . "Crystal!" He passed on to another advertisement, and there was contagious rapture in his zestful reading. "'White coutil corsets — very low bust with whole silk elastic tops, deep-fitting over hips, and finished with lacing eyelets at foot of bust. . . . Black corsets with dainty pink silk spot, finished at top with black silk embroidery threaded with ribbon. Four suspenders! Truly a mystic number! And a pink silk spot'!"

"Listen to this!" he cried again, and I had never seen him so vivified, so carried away before. "'Two demure blondes took the beach by storm when they suddenly appeared among the gay throngs garbed in black from head to foot. They had crêpe veils flowing from their tight-fitting bathing caps pinned back in regulation mourning style, the veils falling to the waist-line in the back. The only touch of colour was the narrow white edging round the bottom of the front of the cap. The bathing attire included dainty pumps buttoned across the ankle. The widows did not go near the water but con-

tented themselves with promenading on the beach.'"

He stood and looked at me. He had communicated to me a new sense of the mystery and magic of life. The excited air seemed to hold up to my notice the wonderful stitchery on what Swinburne called "The lifted hem of the garment of Love." I understood what Francis Thompson meant when he wrote

> "The rustle of a robe hath been to me
> The very rattle of love's musketry."

And suddenly I divined how the Saviour had known that someone had touched the hem of His robe. "For she said if I may touch but His clothes I shall be made whole." And again I remembered, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" And again how "His clothing became white and like the flashing lightning, whiter (said Mark with just the quality of emphasis in his utterance my friend would have used had he been there) than any fuller could bleach it." . . .

I left him at the Haymarket standing in the centre of the pavement murmuring over and over again, "Nainsook Directoire knickers trimmed with Swiss insertion."

My brain fluttered and frilled and my thoughts wound in and out like slender ribbons of honey-coloured silk.

THE FIVE SENSES

"You never see life's common things or know
Their strange unfathomable loveliness,
Till with reluctant tread you too must go
Down the strange darkened road of silentness.

Your happy room, old books and sunny flowers,
Jewels that shine through silent floods of hair,
And glittering cobwebs diamonded with showers,
Moonlight that slowly climbs to the darkened stair."

And, like moonlight so climbing, may be my readers share in this angle of vision and vesture.

VIII SPANISH GIRL

SPANISH GIRL*

IS then Aldebaran the star of hell
Lifting alone upon eternal night
One rose of light?
Ah! Fateful lamp
The blood of all mankind is oil for thee at last.
Upon the orgies of oblivion you cast
Your purple glooms.
My lost life quivers redly in your flame!

O Light that callest me by name,
Whom judgment's hoofs could not outstamp,
What deathless spell
Put you upon me still that I
In whose soul shrivelled all the sky
Should loose me from the detriments of dooms,
Shatter the shackles
Of incomputable debacles
And step incompetently free?

Can one light in a midnight single
One shadow from the rest,
One shadow when all shadows intermingle
—One passionate behest
Sever from night what day casts out,
Refuse to death what life repudiates?

O rose that will not let me rest
Espying me in the chaotic rout
What ghostly life now recreates

* A recollection of Salonika.

In shadow shape the man I was, and sets
Me with crepuscular passions quivering?
—Hell's parody of love in silhouette
Upon the stage of dissolution set!—
Can emptiness arise and sing?
Lethe my mouth of ashes wets
And puts a sung song in my heart.
My hollow loins acknowledge whom thou art.
My dusty veins are filled
With the red light that streams from thee.
I rise and come as thou hast willed,
O Light that makest me!
Nay, not Aldebaran but the rose you wear
Red in your cloudy hair!

Am I a disembodied memory
Embracing thee?
Your great breasts rise
In my imaginary hands.
I lie in endless impotence
Vague on your surging life,
Like lights in chaos are your eyes.
Me bodiless
Your arms constrain in ineffectual bands.
Dully I hear
What far distress,
What immemorial strife?

. . . Burn clearlier, Life, and penetrate
This partially-resurrected sense,

SPANISH GIRL

Half corpse, half ghost.
In this confusion dark and dense
But sounds are heard and meanings lost.

. . . Loosen the rose and put it to my ear!

Surely this urgent throbbing I have heard before
Knowing the whence and wherefore?

Burn more intense.
Clasp me as in a vice.

. . . Ah no—
I am a void
Impossibly employed.
Vaguely I know and do not know.
So doth the sea
Receive infinity
Upon its whirling breasts.
I hear a multitudinous roar
And see within your eyes the flashing crests
Of tides that reach no shore.

. . . O weltering womanhood
On whose dispurposed mood
Flotsam
I am!

. . . O scarlet light of lust
Frenzying the disjunct dust!

. . . O thou who bearest me
Upon thy wildered courses timelessly

Hither and thither
And in the end no whither
When will the tyrannous rose wither
And let us lapse together
Vacant in space?

. . . O Whirlpool of Oblivion
Whereon my derelict life is spun
Cease your vain race
And let me like a shadow fall
To depths for ever held in nescience' thrall!

. . . . . .

Morning
And quick winds scattering spice!
You let a ray of sunlight in.
Stand by the lattice—Sin
Bodied in living ivory
With dawn and darkness equal on your head
And one red rose
Flaming triumphantly
That down a white cheek throws
Impossible memories of the Night!
. . . Hark, the birds sing!
Throw wide the window to the light.
It shall not fall on flowers anywhere
Fair as your breasts are fair
Pulsing and glowing there.
It shall not hold
In momentary gold

SPANISH GIRL

Aught younger, aught more old.
The deft beams seek
With gestures sleek
Each nervous beauty in your conscious flesh.
. . . Sweet is the dawn and fresh
The dawn wind on the bed.

Why should I weary of my fate
Where sunlight is insatiate?
It is good to lie here
In endless mornings pale and clear
And see the roses trembling on the sill
And your breasts quivering still!
O thou whose unremitting lust
Constrains my dust!
And as the day declines
The red rose shines
Unspent,
Omnipotent!

IX THE NEVER-YET-EXPLORED

THE NEVER-YET-EXPLORED

"Here in the flesh, with the flesh, behind,
Swift in the blood and throbbing on the bone,
Beauty herself, the universal mind,
Eternal April, wandering alone,
The God, the Holy Ghost, the Atoning Lord,
Here in the flesh, the never-yet-explored."

MASEFIELD.

"All creation gave another smell beyond what words can utter."—GEORGE FOX.

SHE was like Galsworthy's slime-tree, coldly fair, formal in her green-beflowered garb —which yet shakes, when the wind enters her heart, with the passion one sees when bees are swarming, a fierce humming swirl of movement, as though she had suddenly gone mad with life and love—tumults soon dying away; leaving her once more perfumed, gracious, delicately alluring.

Are you, did not Galsworthy ask (with that terrible accent of his), the essential tree when you are cool and sweet, vaguely seductive as now, or when you are being whirled in the arms of the wind and seem so furiously alive? When shall I see your very spirit? . . . . And as he fought in his dream towards his vision of the Lady of the Lime-Tree, separated from him by a gulf of nothingness which was soft and cool to the touch of his face and hands, one of her ears lit

up by a great buttercup, her eyes velvety and dark and dewy there, her body lovely though nearly hidden by creamy flowers growing stiffly round her as might asphodels, "on her lips came the sweetest and strangest of all smiles." Seeing her smile thus he struggled desperately against the cold smooth nothingness, and while he struggled he saw her quiver and writhe as though she, too, wanted to come to him. Her breast heaved, her eyes grew deeper, darker, they filled with glistening moisture and seemed to entreat him. . . . Straining with a furious strength he never thought to have had against that colourless impalpable barrier, he crept forward inch by inch, and as he came nearer and nearer to her he saw her eyes liven and begin to glow sweet and warm as the sun through heather honey; shivers ran through her limbs; a lock of her hair drifted towards him.

A lime-blossom loosened by the bees and wind had drifted across his lips, its scent was in his nostrils. There was nothing before him but the fields and the moor and close by the lime-tree. He looked at her. She seemed to him far away, coldly fair, formal in her green-beflowered garb, but for all that he knew in his dream he had seen and touched her soul. . . . And in her dream? There was nothing before her but the red and yellow expanse of the carpet,

the familiar furniture gleaming or misty in the strong sunlight beating in through the windows, and herself, this Mrs Morgan, far away, coldly fair, formal in her pale silks. . . . She looked at herself.

She tried to define her nature. "Colourable and plastic, fashioned by the words, the looks, the acts and even by the silences and abstentions surrounding one's childhood; tinged in a complete scheme of delicate shades and crude colours by the inherited traditions, beliefs or prejudices—unaccountable, despotic, persuasive, and, often, in its texture, romantic,"—"a mobilised and moving equilibrium! Much once central is now lapsed, submerged, instinctive, or even reflex, and much once latent and budding is now potent and in the focus of consciousness for our multiplex, compounded, or recompounded personality." . . .

She left it there and took, as it were, as the terms of reference for the particular inquiry she was now about to conduct, certain quotations from her recent reading which timeously recurred to her. The first of these was Richard Middleton's dexterous observation that "nearly all the real sorrows of youth are due to this dumbness of the emotions. We teach children to convey facts by means of words, but we do not teach them how to make their feelings

intelligible." The second was Pearsall Smith's statement that "the older kind of names for human passions and feelings we may call 'objective.' That is to say, they are observed from outside and named by their effects and moral consequences. . . . Most people must have felt at one time or another the incongruity of ugly names like greed or malice for feelings delightful at the moment, and a non-human observer from another planet might be puzzled to find that the passions and propensities that were called by the least attractive names were the ones that mankind most persistently indulged." Introspection, she thus realised, was often, quite rightly, condemned as an unhealthy tendency, for it was very common and very disastrous to study feelings in order to increase their pleasantness. As a consequence language had become quite apathetic, generalised until it was without meaning. It was necessary that she should (sitting up a little and drawing her legs in) not sink into a warm bath of self-contemplation but make the coldest effort to regard her own organism as merely one among others. Her physical-intellectual being was the sensorium of Nature, but it was also one thing among natural things whose number was legion. It was the mirror in which she viewed the world, but it was also part of the world, the part most neces-

sary for her to know and work upon, and its value to her depended upon her knowledge of its natural distortions and how to test and correct them. Next she "staked down" as it were, with an odd sensation of sudden successfulness, a quotation the source of which she could not remember, "Immaturity, degeneracy, disharmony, aberration are conditions of consciousness in which no communion with reality can take place," and her mind seemed to tremble with an imminent efflorescence of spirit, an opening-up of faculty, the breaking forth of new life upon high levels of joy, and she was full of the strange and insatiable craving for reality, "the diadem of beauty."

This brought her swiftly to her next point. "The essence of life lies in the movement by which it is transmitted." And she felt that she had satisfactorily completed a most delicate and difficult task when she discovered ready for this end in her mind these lines from that strange drama "In the Name of Time":—

> "If there be judgment it shall be required
> Of women what delight their golden hair
> Has yielded—have they put its wealth to use
> Or suffered it to lie by unenjoyed?"

And now she saw as from a wooded height the land of fulfilment but not the road thereto.

She knew that she was in a most subtle and

successful fashion alienating the affections of her youngest son Frank from his *fiancée* Jessie Butler—adopting methods against which Jessie was too young to defend herself, and against which, constitutionally, Frank had no defence—for reasons which were so indistinguishably woven into the texture of her incomprehensible life as scarcely to admit of being most fugitively recognised by herself in her keenest moments of self-analysis; reasons which expressed themselves definitely, effectively, and yet indefinably, without her volition and often against her will, in the arguments of her eyes and the subtlest persuasions of her contours and colours. That was all—and yet it was proving enough. No! It was subtler even than that—a matter of involuntary tremors and unaccountable viewless vibrations; of co-intuitioning nerves; of incessant arterial heliographing in codes of infinitesimal pulsations indecipherable by any of the separate senses; of obscure and unseizable interactions of personality, wine-like and wind-like; going by unknowledgeable personal channels . . . . by flames passing from sensation to sensation.

In the recesses of her own consciousness Mrs Morgan admitted that she did not care. She was never, when she was in a genuine introspective mood (whatever she might be when her

consciousness was limited and hampered by the presence of her husband or others, or when the functioning of her mind was altered by the pressure of any of the various normal external preoccupations incidental to wifehood and housekeeping) a victim to that uneasy pain of conscience "which seizes both the head and the parenchyma of the heart and thence the epigrastic and hypograstic regions beneath."

It was an instance of a specific aboulia. "Specific aboulias in real life," she knew, "invariably prove when analysed to be due to our unconscious repulsion against the act that cannot be performed" (*i.e.* her acquiescence in this proposed match). "In other words, whenever a person cannot bring herself to do something that every conscious consideration tells her she should do, it is always because for some reason she does not want to do it. This reason she will seldom own to herself and is in the great majority of cases only most dimly if at all aware of." . . . It was even with a tonic and penetrating thrill that she recognised the extensive abnormality of her awareness. . . . In other moods she went through the customary conscious processes that so involve and conceal the core of an aboulia. Time and again on such occasions (generally when her husband or other members of her family, all unsuspecting and

safely external, were present) she worked herself up, pointing out to herself her obvious duty, with the cruellest self-reproaches, lashing herself to agonies of remorse and once more falling away to calm and by no means unpleasurable recognition of the impotence of her conscious self to control even in her own case the hidden effective factors of human intercourse guiding and enticing all life irresistibly and incessantly to unimaginable ends.

She frankly admitted that she could put into words no conceivable objection to their union. She knew of no bar or impediment. On the contrary, she was perfectly satisfied that Jessie was in all likelihood a more suitable mate than any other Frank was likely to choose or have chosen for him; that she would beyond doubt make him a true and faithful wife, that she possessed graces of mind and person which in conjunction with Frank's would almost infallibly conduce to what the world (and themselves) would recognise as a happy and successful marriage—quite as happy and successful as her own had been, which was, as matters went in the world at the time,* no inconsiderable happiness and no small success from any normal point of view.

* The beginning of the twentieth century—a terrible period.

She recognised it as typical of her character that in realising that she was thus working, involuntarily but no longer unconsciously, against what in all likelihood were her son's best chances of human happiness (not to take Jessie into consideration) she was not so much concerned with the direction in which her influences were operating, or with the probable consequences, as with the unphraseable puzzles of the causation of that tendency, with the mysteries of her own motivation. If means only existed or could be devised not so much for expressing in words, but for thinking exactly about, such matters, how much nearer she would get to herself; vast regions of perceptions and correspondences eluded the imaging powers of her surface consciousness. What a small part of the whole real experience could the tiresome cerebral pantomime of voice and vision contrive to represent! She sought after clear instances of audition, distinct "interior words," whereby she might translate her intense intuitions into forms with which her surface mind might deal. She was actuated by motives conforming to a rhythm too great for her to grasp, so that manifestations of it appeared erratic and unprepared.

She rubbed the tip of her nose between the ball of her thumb and the knuckle of her fore-

finger. For a moment she was startled as it occurred to her to ask what had prompted her to do so. She had stumbled on a clue. Instantly, however, she realised that it was a clue which she could not follow up, and it was with impatience that she permitted her thoughts to seize upon it, knowing that they would require to come back, in a little while, nonplussed, to this point of departure. . . . Undoubtedly, so far, it seemed that the solution must lie in the direction of rendering intelligible her obscure olfactory intimations rather than those of any other sense. Was the nose the key to many of the closest mysteries of human motivation—the nose, that strange winged instrument of an incalculable sentience, which, as it were, contributed to the mental atmosphere potent and pervasive elements appreciable only—and even then unintelligibly—in the crudest terms of their most obvious effects? How could she read the riddle of this sphinx squatting between her eyes? It was not any abnormal fineness of smell she possessed, but far-reaching intuitions that were somehow obscurely bound up with her olfactory sense, appreciable even by herself, and that only in a most rudimentary and fugitive fashion in their relation to nasal sensations, not to be disengaged by the subtlest efforts of her intelligence from the general complex of

any normal psychological and physiological situation and yet most potently determinant of action, bound up most intimately and effectively with the innermost secrets of her personality—in themselves, in fact, almost solely determining her "disposition." She felt that if she could only "clear her nose" she would come instantly to self-knowledge. Her thoughts turned back again, as she had foreseen, slinking like dogs with nasal catarrh:

"My thoughts are fixed in contemplation
Why this huge earth, this monstrous animal
That eats her children, should not have ears and eyes."

She recognised from the outset that to endeavour to arrive at any systematised conclusion as to the reasons for her attitude was bound to prove futile, reminding herself that we cannot concede even to the brute data of sense that fixity and security which a comfortable realism demands. Only by noting an infinitesimal and fugitive detail here, the flitting shadow of a sensation there, by patiently recalling the tiniest nuances of difference in the effect upon herself at different times of different perceptions—shining shadows of difference—by making as it were here and there points in the shifting landscape of that part of her recent emotional history relevant to the matter in mind, and so endeavouring to triangulate that

district of her soul whence these influences emanated, could she hope to arrive at even the most fragmentary conclusions.

She cunningly discerned, however, that to imagine that this district or these purposes were central to her nature was probably fallacious. And to understand that her husband (that strange man, with his lumbaginous licence of movement, at once ponderous and erratic), her children, her friends, her enemies, each of all her acquaintances, had in relation to her more or less definite, and widely differing, conceptions of what her nature was—none of which, of course, in any way approximated to the indeterminable reality any more than her own conception before she adopted her present agnostic position had done—made her problem multitudinously difficult.

Her realisation definitely that the whole "amazing reality of her concealed nature," for no reason that could be discerned by her conscious self, was set dead against this marriage had come one afternoon when she had been going out with Jessie's mother for a saunter down the river-side. When she had arrived, Mrs Butler was in the act of dressing. Her face shone rosily. She tried hard to recall in their initial vividness every sensation she had experienced in the presence of that phenomenon. She failed

to discover by ransacking her memory that she had received the slightest unhealthy (unhealthy, not disagreeable—unhealthy for some incomprehensible but very urgent reason was the quality of which she was in search, and not unhealthy in any virtual way but merely in antipathy with the secret standards of her own functioning!) impression.

Patiently her visual imagination recreated the big red face, the smile, the little twinkling eyes, half-birdlike, half-piggish, each separate crow's-foot in itself and in respect of the contribution it gave to the expression as a whole, the under-swell of the chin, the disposition of the throat, the way of the hair—over the ears particularly, and in the effect of the fashion in which it was pulled up from the nape. . . . Mrs Butler had been in petticoat and camisole. The petticoat was negative—a cancelling stripe—that was to say, it did not affect her as if it had been one of her own (it would be to overrate her perceptions, however, to say that its effect upon her was exclusively Mrs Butlerian), but it aroused no speculations of any kind, and the legs beneath it were apparently quite irrelevant. There had been something, however, about the bust—unconnected with the quality of the linen into which it was somewhat negligently stuffed, with the details of the lacework or the ribbons or the

way in which they were crossed and tied. Nor could she definitely attribute it to the remotest sense of geometrical impropriety in the fashion of the bunching and gathering.

It was a matter of a line, some indescribable faint flaw in moulding, an almost invisible "indisposition" of flesh just over the right breast, an elusive indetermination of form. She endeavoured with a conscious impossibilism to reproduce it on paper, to achieve with the stub of a pencil the faintest approximation which would in any way make this feeling of hers more definite. The effort was hopeless. Then, suddenly, with a swift, soft movement she crossed the room displaying as she walked that lengthening of the joints as when a desert mare canters along the sand. Her fingers glided swiftly down the buttons of her gown. In a second she had freed herself from its ensheathing. Garment after garment fell until she stood almost naked—naked but for a single filmy garment, slipping slightly off her shoulders. Then she turned to the mirror. The light deepened the hollows of her delicate temples and the double furrow between her clever irregular eyebrows. Her eyes held the shady look of long-suppressed desire. Her ears threw red stubs down the shadowy orange of her neck. Her glittering ear-rings were reflected like flecks of moonlight in the

clear golden skin at the angles of her cheeks. Her face was more characteristic than beautiful, belonging as it were to "an upper plateau" with a "savage poignancy in serenity" stamped upon it, intrepid, individual. Nine men would pass it: the tenth sell his immortal soul for it—if he had one. . . . She had never met one of these tenth men. . . . The paleness of some strong feeling tinged her face. A slight trembling ran through her frame. Her inner soul struggle was acting like a strong developing fluid upon a highly sensitised plate. Passion, self-contempt, cruelty, ruthless curiosity, humour, impotence chased one another like shadows across her cheeks. Naked flesh, her own or another's, always affected her thus. Her bare wrist, slender and nervous, had something of the look of a leopard's claw or the leg of a gazelle. . . . She pressed her palms slowly down under her thighs. A purple vibration waved across her face. Then with a sudden gesture she ripped off her remaining garment and stood squarely in all her throbbing nakedness.

She was conscious now that her thought was pursuing a passionate method that was ubiquitous, that was inadmissible, a method ancillary to a conception not as (impotently recognised in an atmosphere of competing flashes of insight!) one could claim to function, but as, for

two pins, one fine afternoon, it might become pathologically patent that one did, insomuch as the carnalities inherent even in the best could no longer be subordinated. "She looked out of herself," westwards in the flesh as it were, "into the world of men and there she saw a sight which filled her with unspeakable distress. The world seemed simply to give the lie to this great truth of which her whole being was so full. The effect upon her was in consequence, as a matter of necessity, as confusing as if it denied that she was in existence herself." If she looked into a mirror and did not see her face she would have the same sort of feeling which actually came upon her as she looked upon closely woven humanity in which such a small moiety of the incommensurable sentience of which she was so throbbingly conscious was utilised—a panorama of insensate maceration. She felt capable of producing a wholesale labefaction of life by simply daring to be herself. Civilisation made life "a sad science of renunciation,"—condemned her to a fractional existence, her permitted courses an inconsequent commentary on the margin of her uncomprehended soul, ending in the intolerable anti-climax of her animal death!

She had never felt before to any similar extent the cruelty of Nature's law, exciting sensations

which could not be gratified and desires which could not be justified—never realised so clearly that Nature had no respect for the conventions of society about sexual commerce. "Blessed," said Hawthorne, "are all simple emotions, be they bright or dark; it is only the mixture of them that is infernal."

She rigged up in the forefront of her mind hasty skeletons, characterless as Pope's women, of civilised conceptions — hollow colourless forms in postures of paralysis corresponding to nothing ever entertained in a human heart—grotesque puppets — and her mind quivering anew with a simultaneous recognition of the wild unphraseability and utter ordinariness of her sensations and desires, destroyed them again "with a crash of broken commandments." "Women"—she remembered Meredith's dictum—"who dare not be spontaneous! This is their fate only in degree less inhuman than that of the Hellenic and Trojan princesses offered up to the gods."

Who was this mighty and magnificent and terrible female creature, with lightning in her flesh and thunder in her hair,—with hooded imponderable eyes and bosoms like fog-bound mountains; allied with the ultimate precipitous splendours of life; a votarist of incalculable powers and majesties rather felt than conceived;

a lonely, passionate and hungering spirit in a marvellous and intolerable form, set apart for tragedy to come? . . . She was carried headlong by the rushing rhetoric of her longings.

> "Impériales fantaisies
> Amours des somptuosités,
> Voluptueuses frénésies,
> Rêves d'impossibilités."

She thought of her pitiful measures of accomplishment, the preponderance of her forced renunciations, her impotent hungers of heart, outwith the swirl of blood, the trampling of pulses, the violin play of lightning muscles—bound in upon her silent bones, sealed into anæmic courses, marooned in barren continences!

The reduction of the intricacy and wonder of womanhood into a "rag and a bone and a hank of hair" was not more inhuman than would be her present dwindling back from this amazing stature of her spirit into a commonplace size in suburban wives.

By what secret mechanism did she and all other human beings so dwarf and confine themselves, and why? It made her think of the author who wrote that "he followed a small maid into an even smaller room." Because civilisation exalted morality at the expense of life its conventions seemed abortive and unconscionable and its effect unnecessarily withering. Such in-

tuitions as these portrayed a clear outline of the appalling commonplaceness which scenes of involition assume when they become a conscious environment—and yet to how fine a degree a woman might develop her sensibilities and her balance in a monotony of needless inhibition!

This Mrs Morgan that she was—would become again as instantaneously and effortlessly (slipping on a *peignoir* and having had "one of her headaches") if her husband or one of her children should come in just now—was so aptly and economically contrived, to all appearances spontaneous and free in the consciousness that conceived her; moving with a specified grace, displaying a recognised variety of discreet and appropriate gesture. So tense and subtilised was this accepted fiction of herself, that she had her being within it without any sense of imprisonment. Thought of it did not affect her as if this Mrs Morgan was any mere automaton, any stuffed shape staring glassily out of irremediable posture . . . nor even as a separate personality assumed at her convenience for certain purposes . . . but as a fairy, the face of which was but a screen, vividly visible on which the suitable selection of her emotions was cast like the lights and colours of a film. With a curious sense of pride she recognised the artistry of that life she was able to contrive

under such unconscionable limitations, conjuring up the effects she made as sharply painted as recollections of a dream: and saw herself doing so—leading that usual life of hers, being so perfectly, dexterously and daintily what people thought her (people who could not think)—and her husband and the rest of the company like flittering ephemerides of the spirit under the profound and radiant gaze of her real self.

The artistic temperament. Did not most artists at the end of their careers become discontented with the form in which they had worked? They had succeeded through obedience to that form, but it seemed to them that a rare success lay uncaptured outside these limits. They were tempted by what seemed lawless in life itself: by what was certainly various and elastic in life. They were impatient with the slowness of results, with their rigidity, inside these inexorable limits. The technique which they had perfected seemed too perfect: something cried out in chains and they would set that voice, that Ariel, free. . . . But could she?

She stood square to the mirror and drew herself up to her full height, hollowing her back a little, like a gymnast on the horizontal bar, and, looking at herself, she realised with a sudden fear how her new knowledge imperilled her in

her relations with her husband and her sons, remembering what Angela of Foligno said . . . "because of this change in my body therefore I was not always able to conceal my state from my companion or from the other persons with whom I consorted, because at times my countenance was all resplendent and rosy and my eyes shone like candles."

Closely she scrutinised her breasts. In the shifting of a contour, in the motion of a shadow on the skin, she sought for the slightest clue to this elusive recollection of—was it a movement? —an effect. All in vain! Beyond a vague tantalising sense (as when something is "on the very tip of one's tongue" yet stays unspeakable) of knowing that somewhere along the line of this strange and subtle speculation lay the truth, she achieved nothing. Before leaving the mirror she closely examined her nose, breathing "nostrils of investigation" as if in some incomprehensible fashion, the effect for which she was seeking—that fugitive sensation of shape—would be reproduced in a quivering motion of the wings. But no!

Turning again with a sense of having been arrested suddenly in the wild course of an inexplicable aberration and becoming, as with eyes like those of a dreamer suddenly awakening from a vivid adventure to confront familiar

things (a good instance of a common and somewhat indescribable sensation analogous to by-psychic duality—the fortuitous phenomenon by which spirits are often uncertain as to whom they really represent), related again to the actual facts of her existence—vulning herself, as heralds say of the pelican, in her piety—like a Greek chorus the furniture awkwardly obtruding its crude significances stood round her passionate soul in travail. Oh, the grotesque, stupid, pitiful interpositions of pictures, chairs, ornaments, needlework! Her household gods had acquired all the repulsive and puerile crudity of heathen idols—the whole room was stuck like an incongruous gargoyle on the tower of her mood. . . . And through the window in the oblique light "mere circlings of force there, of iron negation, of universal death and merciless indifference!" with, nearer, a light shallow, an outer reach, a swaying edge of the deep metropolis (like a windless tide invading an unknowledgeable shore, remotely and with infinite gentleness, lapping the abysmal dark foundations of the soaring house, alone of all things alive with its dark and durable secrecy, in which she so inconceivably lived), making an electric ravel, full of inconsequent glitter, and with little black unsteadinesses of people, like masses of flies on the broad blond pavements between

which the streets were hung like long fine nets, quivering with a close-working subtlety of movement, holding a congested haul of cabs and cars and vehicles of all kinds and colours, endlessly miscellaneous but merged and dwarfed and suppressed into the tiniest courses, almost indistinguishable . . . all so small, swarming infinitesimally away down there, sown through the thready complicated radiance . . . seeming little more than swarms of midges hung in endless fine nets of flashing and failing light in a nethersky; drifting through strands of light and heat . . . now, with a sense of panic, steepening about her as if the lines of her vision were miraculous dry paths between precipitous seas and all these but exposed sections of the infinite fisheries of fate . . . now quiet, and decided and remote, rather beautiful, and yet seeming to have some strange cold power over her . . . and again all so mild, so very old, so faint and floral, with a far-off life of its own that came stealing in upon her, very faint, swelling, sinking, festive, mournful, . . . lustrous, mild and illusionless. This thin glitter and fume, this white and fawn presentment below, the shaken kaleidoscope of a metropolitan fragment, did not exist really . . . it rested upon solid darkness, one with the mighty irresistible darkness, upon which she was hoisted into this bright

room and existence of hers . . . like a gleam of coloured oil upon dark water . . . like a fair faint dream in an Egyptian night (her ears appraised the marvellous *fioritura* of the view, a graduation of small light sounds) . . . but what was it?—nothing! Just nothing! "It is amongst such communities as these that happiness will find her last refuge on earth, since it is among them that a perfect insight into the conditions of existence will be longest postponed." Very strange and immaterial were these glitterings of a toy civilisation away down there in the fair blind fabulating streets, a pale calm through which the generations flew like shadows, and the windows high as her own over the way were blue as crystals full of sorcery, shining with a fascinating fatality. In a sudden dizziness as she looked they seemed to rock a secret and their panes seemed luminous, transparent, as if the secret were burning visible in them. Was it true of her, as of Coleridge, that the further she ascended from animated nature the greater in her became the intensity of the feeling of life? . . . Could she dismiss her problems merely by going downstairs?

She crossed the room and threw herself down on a sheepskin rug in front of the fire . . . turning her thoughts now into another channel, recalling the way, or rather the ways, she had

been affected by seeing Jessie's father walking in front of her up the street. He was a tall man, spare, with a slight stoop, a stiff fashion of the arms and legs. It seemed impossible that in that precise and mean *ensemble* she could find anything so stupendously objectionable as to mobilise her every instinct to avert this marriage, despite the fact that it was so pre-eminently a satisfactory proposition from every social, material, sentimental and ordinary point of view. Yet such was the case. And she could not discover wherein her objection actually resided, or how it had been stimulated by a back view of Mr Butler. It was, of course, pathological or psychological—practically, here at all events, synonymous terms. It was the invisible and indefinable power that controlled her life. Vaguely she felt that the purposes to which these instincts were directed had practically nothing to do with herself as an individual, or with Frank or Jessie—that they were phylogenetic, intimately implicated with the whole reproductive mechanism of humanity, that in something similar if not identical lay what beneath all the *camouflage* of love, interest, ideals, beauty and so forth, occasioned the suicidal attraction of this man or that man to this woman or that woman. . . . Every crease of his trousers, the whole geometrical arrange-

ment of his frame, the clicking black boots, the bony hands, the shape and angle of his head, and the way in which his ears were fastened to the sides of it, the curves of his bowler, came back to her, but nowhere could she isolate the slightest suggestive detail.

She evoked Jessie herself, with her sherry-brown eyes and flat back, visualising her with an indescribable completeness and accuracy, subjecting her to a thorough pre-mortem, going over her from head to heel, every line, every tint, every habit of her body and mind—unavailingly. She only got near it when the concentration of her mind reached such a pitch that this visualised Jessie seemed to become part of herself, sharing the same vital functions. Then she had the most obscure sensation of something that did not harmonise, that escaped from this imaginary unification, of an unplaceable flaw—of a tiniest discord, as it were, immediately swallowed up and lost in the orchestrated sentience of which she was conscious, of a something unamenable to this twining of their entities. Somewhere the wind of passion failed to keep the sails full and the foam at the bow. Jessie was a pitiful bow for the brave bending of sex . . . a glittering toy where she should have been a golden torment.

Thoroughly she worked this demoniac strain

of sensuality which she had found in herself . . . criticising every movement, detecting every little inadequacy in her, every tiny congenital inability to respond to the uttermost, to give all and to give enough. Frank would probably be only very remotely if at all conscious of a disappointed muscle here and of there a vainly clamouring pulse, but . . .! She thought she saw Jessie looking up at him with her mildly bulging eyes shaken and with a batlike bewildered flicker in their depths. Were these to be given to him in lieu of his birthright—"eyes terrible as an army with banners"?

These speculations were full of that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams. How to understand, then, what made the truth of her mood, its meaning, its violent and invisible essence? It was impossible. No processes of thought could convey that sense of blood running blindly through a net of glimmering surmises; of thought that was but as a mesh of cheating gleams on the verge of the incalculable floods of life.

She who had thought herself bankrupt (and whom civilisation insisted upon treating as if she were) discovered in herself a secret hoard of evolutionary momentum. Wave followed wave from the sea of her soul. She was taken by new billows of largess. After a period of

stability and rest her unstable tendency to variation had broken out with tremendous force, with an abrupt access of vitality, rolling up she knew not whence, breaking old barriers, overflowing the limits of old conceptions, changing her rhythm of receptivity, the quality of her attention to life. She was entinctured and fertilised by a new upwelling of her submerged life. She was on the verge of saltatory developments. The Cloud of Unknowing had passed over. This realisation came like the winds of March. Experiencing it she participated in the deathless magic of eternal springs, full of emotional efflorescence, with an enhanced vitality, a wonderful sense of power and joyful apprehension, as towards worlds before ignored or unknown, flooding her consciousness. Her life was raised to a higher degree of tension than ever before, and therefore to a higher perception of reality.

How like Frank was to what his father had been when she married him. How curiously the same body had been transmitted from father to son and how tragic was the likeness when these two bodies of the same flesh were made to contain so different a spirit. At a little distance it could hardly be told which was the old and which the young, so exact a copy was the son of the father. Close, Frank made her

forget the years almost, made the relationship between them impossible, so exactly did he reduplicate not only what his father had looked like but what she had thought he really was when she married him, and renew the sensations and desires within her which she had had then and had long ago had to suppress so cruelly. How much happier she would have been if his father had had her son's nature—how much more she could have had from life—how much more she could have given. If she had married Frank instead of his father surely she would not have remained a mere adumbration of her destined meaning, a magnificent provision of organs intended for functions which had never developed. She thought of Frank—the bright burnish of his crisply curling chestnut hair, the back of his splendidly moulded neck, full and round and strong, bronzed to the collar line, white as milk below, the first two or three articulations of his spine softly rounded, so deeply embedded in muscular tissues as to be scarcely discernible, . . . of "his clean blueness of eye and whiteness of tooth and puissancy of neck and wrist ripe brown with stored sunshine."

Oh, merry love, strong, ravishing, burning, zestful, stalwart, unquenched! . . . . She saw herself again with parted lips and panting rounded breasts and a dancing devil in each

glowing eye and a throbbing darting tongue and quick biting teeth, giving muscle for muscle and vein for vein, while the wild music in her heart rose, now slow, now fast, now deliriously wild, seductive and intoxicating. . . . She could feel the answering shiver that quivered up to her.

"Is it beyond thee," her spirit seemed to challenge Jessie's, "to be glad with the gladness of this rhythm, to be tossed and lost and broken in the whirl of this fearful joy? All things rush on, they stop not, they look not behind, no power can hold them back, they rush on, keeping steps with this restless rapid music, seasons come dancing and pass away . . . colours, tunes and perfumes pour in endless cascades in the abounding joy that scatters and gives up and dies every moment."

It was getting dark. The furniture shone in the fitful firelight dull and livid as old armour.

"Her white breasts gleamed;
Her neck seemed conscious of its loveliness;
Her lips, tired of tame kisses, parted with
The expectancy of proud assault; she was
As one who lives for a last carnival
Of love in which she may be stabbed and torn
By large excess of passion. . . .
Her heart now leaps with life
And now lies sleeping like a coiled snake.
But in to-night's cold moon she burns and glows.
Her heart is housing many a mad desire. . . ."

X

CONSUMMATION

CONSUMMATION

ABLAZE yet unconsumed I lay in thee
And instantly flame blended into flame,
As in a rising wind the light fires came.
Curve after curve climbed shining into me
I felt light flowing from your hands and feet,
I lay in incandescence 'twixt your thighs,
And saw the radiance mounting in your eyes
And heard your soaring heart's delirious beat.

Ablaze yet unconsumed I lie in thee.
Once lit such fires blaze to the end of time
To keener, clearer flaming still set free.
The spirit like a wind moves to and fro
Until in crystal heat, O Love Sublime,
One with eternity our bodies glow!

XI A LIMELIGHT FROM A SOLITARY WING

A SOLITARY WING*

"Said Jesus, on whom be Peace, 'the world is
a bridge: Build no house on it.'"

"Just when we are safest, there's a sunset touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, someone's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears.
As old and new at once as Nature's self
To wrap and knock and enter in the soul,
Take hands again and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol on his base again,
The grand Perhaps!"

AND the indefatigable self-analyst in time gets to know and anticipate all these variations and permutations, weary of the whirl of the pool, sick to death of the ever-

*("A spiritual snapshot," in his own phrase, taken in the spring of 1910 by the Secretary of the St Ninian's Church Literary and Debating Society (the meetings of which Fred had attended regularly throughout the winter, taking the liveliest part in the debates and giving a couple of papers himself), who, in a covering letter, is careful to explain that this is merely the impression Fred communicated to him of his religious position at that time. "It must be remembered that I had only a single point of contact with this extraordinary personality," he adds, "and that I had at that time no knowledge whatever of his other and quite irreconcilable activities. I did not know that he was known in other circles as a philosophic anarchist; nor that he was the author of the powerful Neo-Catholic articles which created such a sensation in the autumn of 1909 and won so many converts for Rome. Nor had I the slightest suspicion of his dipsomaniacal tendencies nor of his countervailing eroticism. Even now, however, with all the material at my disposal, I am satisfied that I have accurately depicted here the attitude in which without the slightest trace of hypocrisy he was then approaching spiritual realities.")

changing changelessness, knowing just how the circles run, just how the lights and shadows of his moods will play upon them. It is not healthy to live for ever in a mental cinema, least of all when you have, with slight differences in the screenings and accompaniments, seen all the films before, and over-familiarity with the technique of production has bred contempt. . . . But because of the faith that lay away deep down in it this mind realised even in the darkest of the distracted hours it spent in the great mazes of futility and jungles of false conceptions that "I cannot see the good of it" was one of the worst of reasons for ceasing its struggles. Much of the best work is work done of which one cannot see the good at the time of the doing.

He breathed Stevenson's prayer perhaps: "Help us with the grace of courage that we be none of us cast down when we sit lamenting among the ruins of our happiness or our integrity: touch us with fire from the altar that we may be up and doing to rebuild our city." Thus worked in him one of the unrecognised powers of faith; its repellent power; the power by which (this both of course for good and evil, but, at all events, in these regions of uncertainty for good and all!) it rejects new ideas which conflict with its own root certainties.

And after all it is a fact of human nature, as William James has put it, that men can live and die by the help of a sort of faith that goes without a single dogma or definition—the bare assurance that this natural order is not ultimate, but a mere sign or vision, the external staging of a many-storied universe, in which spiritual forces have the last word and are eternal. Only, of course in matters of this kind, the critical and creative mind cannot afford to be behind the scenes, but must have a good view from the front. From the first religions are not the product of logical reflection and experiment, but of sentiment and aspiration, coming into being as pure intuition and afterwards invading the provinces of reason and assimilating the thought of centuries in their own sympathies. He was now quite certain that the imagination had some way of dealing with the truth, which the reason had not, and that commandments delivered when the body is still and the reason silent are the most binding that the souls of men can ever know. So far so good! But this left for his journalistic mind the more difficult problem of communicability. Truth, without the progressive belief of mankind in it, seemed vague and helpless. Of what little avail are the profoundest thoughts if they contain no germ of comfort! The difficulties of the world were not to be

solved by one young fellow's subconscious perceptions. And the notion of human progress was derived from just such demands of the spirit. It is all very well to say that the pleasure is in the chase—that "to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive," and that the true success is labour—but surely all the activities of man, all his efforts and all his enterprises, presuppose a hope in him of attaining an end. Once kill this hope and his movements become senseless, spasmodic and convulsive, like those of someone falling from a height. Many times a day at this period he suffered from vertigo on the brink of such abysses. These were the times known to all active minds, when one feels oneself above any and all human books, when music, art, reading all fail as resources to alleviate or interest, and one becomes possessed of an irresistible desire to go forth and find some pain keener than one's own, to meet people more unhappy than oneself (and he knew that there were millions such). Never did he too greatly exaggerate his own trial; he was always indeed cynically conscious of his youthful immaturity, but he only knew that his heart ached night and day, and that the only solace possible would seem to be to find other hearts which ached night and day with more reason than his. And because of these impulses he felt a good-

ness in this subtly and slowly developing religion of his, nourishing thus a sentiment of the infinite value of existence, of the necessity of continual contact with living men and women, allied, as he felt it to be, with the best in him against the worst, and holding for ever before him the necessity of becoming a new man, making him understand that pain is a deliverer, increasing his respect for the consciences of others. And it was his steady if largely subterranean development along these lines that reassured him most. He was not one of those who would scream with the rabble, feel the pleasure of a gush for the moment and then sink back again to commonplace levels (however much to superficial observers his labouring spirit might seem to be irretrievably overwhelmed in chaos). He was continually recognising new duties above those whose observance had already commended itself to him, seeing, as it were, beyond the circle of conventional obligations, the dim forms of new claimants on his heart and service, moral innovations, enlargements of human life, horizon after horizon . . . how many such had still to arise? . . . . And in such "Utopian" dreams he saw arising new kingdoms of the spirit set far above the aspirations of the politicians, beyond all the projects of social betterment, a republic of souls in which, above

mere right and sordid utility, above beauty, devotion, holiness, heroism and enthusiasm, the Infinite would have a worship and an abiding city. But he realised the while that it would be essential to eliminate all such suffering and iniquity as is preventible and germane in defective social arrangements, before it would be possible to return to spiritual goods. What he looked for, worked for, prayed for in these beliefs was a nation where class should be bound to class by the fullest participation in the treasure of the one life; where the members of each group of workers should find in their work the development of their characters and the consecration of their powers, where each citizen would know and be strengthened by the knowledge that he laboured not for himself only, not for his family, nor for his country, but for eternal good. So long as there was fear between man and man, so long as there were looks askance, there could be no communion. The new city must be a city of friends and lovers.—And thus in all the surge of new claims, in the encroachments of a thousand interests, in leisure that diminished until it was a marvel to his friends that he could cram so much activity into twenty-four hours, he was sustained by the belief that whatever multiplies the bonds between man and man makes him happier and

better. Friendship being essentially hygienic his soul was never more sanitary. The brotherhood of men as an actual fact, soul to soul intimacy, very blood relationship, he deemed fundamentally essential to the real and endless advance of humanity, and when his fastidious and recusant intellect rebelled, he chastised it by recalling dicta such as Bacon's: "In my course I have known, and according to my measure, have co-operated with great men, and I have never yet seen any plan which has not been mended by the observations of those who were much inferior in understanding to the person who took the lead in the business," or,

"Were there no oxen feeding in the stall
The crib were clean,
But without oxen harvest would be small,
Housekeeping lean,
Wherefore we may not be too prim and nice,
There is no good that doth not cost a price."

Thus would he stand with his eyes widened at the mysteries around him, remembering that, in spite of all his book-lore, what he knew was but a trifle and that the smallest detail of the world was infinitely greater than his own immortal mind, and recognising, too, in that prodigiousness of the universe a safeguarding excellence, since it must hold infinite resources and he might allow it some credit without accusing himself of improvidence. Since the fish

were still spawning in the waters and a million mothers were smiling at their babes and the publishers' catalogues were increasing in number and growing in size and interest, he found fresh courage to be a mere man and to commit the rest to the numberer of the stars.

He fell back on the old, old feeling that something of everything is wanted to make a world —that it takes all sorts and conditions of men and women—that every human being born has his or her ultimate franchise—and that if every opinion is equally insignificant in itself humanity's bewilderment of thought is a mighty net which somehow holds the whole truth.

Live and let live. Think and let think. So his tendency was always to the whole, to the totality, to the general balance of things. Indeed it was his chiefest difficulty (and an ever-increasing one that made him fear at times cancellation to nonentity) to exclude, to condemn, to say No. Here, probably, was the secret of the way in which he used to plunge into the full current of the most inconsistent movements, seeking—always in vain, until he was utterly exhausted, not having failed, however, to enrich every one of them—to find ground upon which he might stand foursquare.

He was always fighting for the absent, eager for forlorn hopes, a champion of the defeated

cause, for those portions of truth which seemed to him neglected: his aim being to complete every thesis, to see all round every problem, to study a question from all possible sides and angles. . . . And thus his dreams were edged with the redeeming inconsistency, the saving dubiety, and he held with Browning the great central liberal feeling, a belief in a certain destiny for the human spirit beyond and perhaps even independent of, our sincerest convictions, and could not see

"What purpose serves the soul or world it tries
Conclusions with, unless the fruit of victories
Stay one and all stored up and guaranteed its own
For ever by some mode whereby shall be made known
The gain of every life."

. . . . . .

And if I may be permitted just a word in the light of what I now know (and that incompletely) with regard to his subsequent career, it shall be simply this, that to my mind the storms of circumstance which have buffeted him so terribly are laden with this message: "And so shall our commission be accomplished which from God we had—to plague His heart until we had unfolded the capacities of His Spirit."

XII A LAST SONG

THE heavens are lying like wreaths
Of dead flowers breaking to dust
Round the broken column of Time.

Like a fitful wind and a cold
That rustles the withered stars
And the wisps of space is my song,

Like a fitful wind and a cold
That whistles awhile and fails
Round the broken column of Time.